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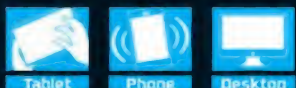
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GAMES EVERYWHERE



THIS MONTH IS looking all kinds of ridiculous. Honestly, the release schedule for March looks more like a November line-up, with the triple-A games out in force – *MGSV: Ground Zeroes*, *Dark Souls II*, *inFamous: Second Son*... it's a terrifying month to be a wallet, that's for sure. And beyond that, things are brighter still – there are hundreds of awesome new games coming to PS3, PS4 and Vita in the not-so-distant future, so we've taken it upon ourselves to pick out the best of the best this issue. We've got the 50 most exciting PS4 games, a round-up of all the cool new stuff coming to Vita and we've not forgotten about PS3 either.

It's times like this that make me wish that I could convert my Xbox Gamerscore into Trophies. If you haven't already burned this issue, I thank you for understanding – I worked on a bunch of other mags before finally finding my home on **Play**, in which time I racked up over 100,000Gs (the equivalent of 100 Platins, not that I actually aced every game) before MS dropped the ball and I realised that it was time to abandon ship. While I was a little sad to wave goodbye to my Xbox Live account, I've not looked back since – there's nothing solely on Xbox that interests me any more, and with the likes of Naughty Dog, Sony Santa Monica and Sucker Punch developing killer games for the PS4, there was never even a choice to be made. *BadRubberPiggy* simply had to die. But *PorthMinster* lives on.

And live he must. There's too much good stuff around for him not to, and he only wants to be playing it on PlayStation. And then he was talking about himself in the third person, which was weird. And then I wasn't. That's better. So let him... *me* be the first to welcome you to this badass new issue of **Play** – by gamers, for gamers, whatever their dark past may be.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya online...

LUKE ALBIGÉS
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@LukemonMGJ
PSN: PorthMinster

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Dark Souls II

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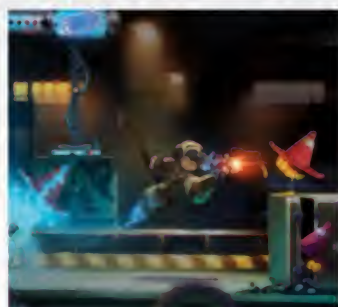


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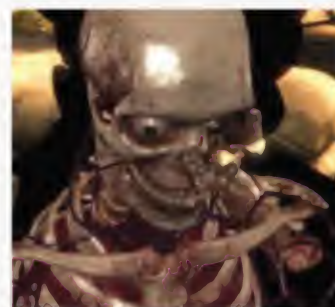
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PS4's 50 MOST WANTED





AFTER A SUPERB LAUNCH AND DECENT SUPPORT IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS, THINGS ARE ABOUT TO REALLY EXPLODE ON PS4

THE GAMES THAT JUST MISSED OUT on the excitement of the launch are just around the corner, newly-announced projects are in full swing and the big names from the best developers in the business just keep on coming. Feast your eyes on what we've picked out as the 50 most important games to look out for in the next few years and before the shouting starts, bear in mind that we're working purely with officially-announced games here – even though we all *know* that *FIFA 15* will be announced any day and hit late September, right now we know just as little as you so featuring it here would be utterly pointless. Go, then, and start your journey into PS4's bright future. We guarantee you'll find something to be excited about...

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THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

DEVELOPER: CD Projekt RED PUBLISHER: Warner Bros

SOD OFF, SKYRIM. DO ONE, DRAGON AGE. MOVE OVER, MORROWIND – GERALT OF RIVIA IS BACK AT LAST

With a two-for-two record of excellent fantasy-RPGs so far, CD Projekt RED is as safe a pair of developmental hands as you're likely to find in the industry nowadays. And while the two prior games were very much built with the PC master race in mind, this third and final part of the trilogy has been planned for consoles from the start.

What does that mean for you? Well, if you played the Xbox 360 port of the second game, you'll know how unwieldy it was – you might as well have been trying to play *Guitar Hero* with a steering wheel at points. But since the DualShock 4 has been as much of a consideration as mouse and keyboard from the off here, you can expect a far more user-friendly experience in *Wild Hunt*. CD Projekt RED claims to be already milking the PlayStation 4 for every last drop of power – not a statement we'd quickly refute based on what we've seen so far. This is looking like one of the most exciting RPGs in years, and will certainly be a must-have come release day.

ETA: Q4 2014



IN THREE WORDS: Gorgeous Fantasy Epic

HYPE



BUNGIE AIMS TO PLEASE

Like in *Borderlands 2*, there's a fusion of tight gunplay and RPG damage calculation at work here. Different characters will favour different types of firearm, too.

IN THREE WORDS: PS4's Halo MMO

HYPE



DESTINY

DEVELOPER: Bungie PUBLISHER: Activision

HALO x BORDERLANDS x WORLD OF WARCRAFT = US NEVER LEAVING THE HOUSE AGAIN

The *Halo* creators coming to PS4 is big news on its own, but the game the team is working on also happens to be one of the most ambitious shooters ever. Hardly surprising, then, that *Destiny* sits at top of many a wishlist right now, blending as it does top-tier FPS gunplay from one of the best studios in the field and the kind of community spirit most MMO creators would kill for. While Bungie is keen to downplay this MMO angle (we know what 'shared-world shooter' means, thanks guys), the end result is a shooter where the line between single-player and multiplayer is blurred – individuals and teams will come across other groups and battle alongside or against one another as the situation dictates. And with loot drops and skill trees coming straight out of Pandora, this fusion of genres and gameplay styles is one we can't wait to have on our PS4s.

ETA: 9 SEPTEMBER

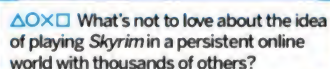


IN THREE WORDS: Even Shinier Loot

HYPE

There's not a lot more to say about *Diablo III* that hasn't already been said, but that doesn't mean we're not excited to play it again. While it cut corners in the visual department through necessity, the PS3 version ditched the controversial real-money Auction House and matched the PC version in terms of patches and improvements, making it a genuine alternative for those who would rather play on console. Now, though, the power of PS4 allows for a version of the game on a par with high-end PC specs and this release will also include the forthcoming *Reaper Of Souls* expansion. As such, it'll be the best console version on the market and we're more than happy to play it all again for that delicious new loot.

ETA: 02 2014



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

DEVELOPER: Zenimax **PUBLISHER:** Bethesda

IN THREE WORDS: Massively Multiplayer Skyrim

HYPE

PC modders have been trying to add multiplayer into *Skyrim* ever since the game launched but needless to say, Bethesda is doing a somewhat more impressive job of its own. Decent uptake to *DC Universe Online* and *FFXIV* proves that console gamers want that hardcore MMO experience, and what better franchise to recruit more gamers to MMOs than the one that brought us *Oblivion* and *Skyrim*? With Blizzard out of the picture and little in the way of competition, Bethesda could just have a hit on its hands here – with the usual scope and scale of an *Elder Scrolls* RPG and a world teeming with other would-be master mages and legendary warriors, it promises to be *Skyrim* on a much grander scale.

ETA: JUNE 2014

EVERQUEST NEXT

DEVELOPER: Sony **PUBLISHER:** Sony



HYPE

We're not entirely sure why people are so fast to write off the concept of MMOs on consoles when *EverQuest* and *Final Fantasy XI* proved that the genre could work with a controller a decade ago. Still, the few we *do* get tend to be more traditional interpretations of genre standards, which is what makes *EverQuest Next* – the game looking to rewrite the MMO rulebook – so appealing. Combining all the usual levelling, loot drops and exploration of the genre with a voxel-based world and crafting system akin to that one game about crafting mines or whatever, everything is destructible and construction has no real limits. If you don't want to level-up and run dungeons, just build what you like, sell it to others and watch the royalties flood in as your creation goes viral. If it even comes close to the hype, it'll be amazing. But it's still likely to be a way off so in the meantime, we'll be in Eorzea if you need us.

ETA: TBA



DEVELOPER: Ready At Dawn **PUBLISHER:** Sony

IN THREE WORDS: Cinematic Steampunk Shooter

HYPE

With two of Sony's most talented teams working on *The Order* together, you know it's going to be good. Both Sony Santa Monica and Ready At Dawn have impressed by making Kratos's adventures sing on every platform, and this new IP already showcases similarly lofty production values. The 19th Century might not seem like the obvious place to set a shooter, but this is no ordinary shooter... and no ordinary 19th Century. It's an alternate version of history where war has massively sped up the advancement of weapons technology, leading to lasers and railguns against a Victorian backdrop. We're already intrigued by the setting and amazed by the presentation... now all that's left is for the two awesome teams to wow us one final time with some badass gunplay and stunning set pieces.

ETA: Q4 2014

50 BIGGEST PS4 GAMES

THE WITNESS

DEVELOPER: Number None **PUBLISHER:** Number None



IN THREE WORDS: 21st Century Myst

HYPE

Braid creator Jonathan Blow gets more than his fair share of bad press, even if he came across as dangerously pretentious in *Indie Game: The Movie*. Still, he's clearly got the one thing that actually matters for a person in his position – the ability to create games that give your brain a workout like nothing else. *The Witness* might not have the same kind of gimmick as *Braid*, but that only works in its favour – here, we have an entire island dotted with connected (and entirely unconnected) puzzles, a sandbox of riddles that makes *Fez* seem like playschool by comparison. The simple style might not be to everyone's tastes but with nearly 600 puzzles on the island at the time of writing and more being threaded in by the day, we doubt anything on PS4 will push the grey matter quite so hard.

ETA: Q3 2014

RAINBOW 6: PATRIOTS

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft



IN THREE WORDS: Troubled Tactical Shooter

HYPE

Where even is *Rainbow 6: Patriots*? That's the real question here. Originally unveiled years ago with a 'gameplay' trailer that featured that infamous 'press X to kiss wife' scene, it soon vanished and hasn't been seen since. Ubisoft has at least confirmed that development has been moved from PS3 to PS4 but it hasn't yet seen fit to come out and show off the new version of the game, probably because it doesn't want to steal any thunder from the delayed *Watch Dogs* or the hugely ambitious (and probably also delayed) *The Division*. Having poured hours into the tactical action of *Black Arrow* and *Vegas*, we really want this *Rainbow* rebirth to be something special. And if that means waiting a little longer, then so be it.

ETA: Q4 2014

ALIEN: ISOLATION

DEVELOPER: The Creative Assembly **PUBLISHER:** Sega

Yes, we've been stung before. But with a new studio at the helm and a new horror vibe to *Isolation*, we're ready to believe that the sins of *AVP* and *Colonial Marines* can be washed away. Closer to *Dead Space* or indie horror titles like *Amnesia* than to your average shooter, The Creative Assembly's PS4 debut pits players against a lone xenomorph on an abandoned ship with no weapons—it's like being hunted by *BioShock 2*'s Big Sister only here, any attempt at confrontation is going to end in a bloody mess.

ETA: Q4 2014



IN THREE WORDS: Bitch Is Back

HYPE

HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER

DEVELOPER: Dennaton Games **PUBLISHER:** Devolver Digital

**IN THREE WORDS:** Controversial Arcade Action

HYPE

Games are getting more graphic every day, with the grisly murders of *Hitman* or even mainstream keystones like *Call Of Duty* offering near photorealistic digital slaughter. So why, then, is it a top-down 16-bit-style game that seems to be attracting so much of the media's attention? Yes, *Hotline Miami* is brutal. But if we had to decide whether to get worked up over the violence of a pixelated score attack game or one in which stabbing somebody in the face actually *looked* like stabbing somebody in the face, we know which we'd choose. More of the same is all we really want, so any improvement over the original's awesome template will be a bonus.

ETA: Q2 2014

GET EVEN

DEVELOPER: The Farm 51 **PUBLISHER:** TBA

IN THREE WORDS: Graphics Is CRAZY

HYPE



The reveal trailer for *The Farm* 51's new game teases something several leagues above anything the studio has done so far. The game will apparently put a lot of stock into the memories of its characters, with *Walking Dead*-style repercussions for actions and, in addition, there's a *Destiny*-esque play to break down solo and multiplayer boundaries by letting players join another's game as enemies, like Agent Hunt mode in *Resident Evil 6* or, for fear of the comparison getting tired, *Dark Souls*' invasions.

ETA: 2015



DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch **PUBLISHER:** Sony

DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch **PUBLISHER:** Sony

IN THREE WORDS: Open World Shenanigans

HYPE

ΔOX□ The special edition of *Second Son* comes with Delsin's beanie. We'll stick to the standard edition, thanks...

We're still trying to get on board with cocky new hero Delsin Rowe, though in truth, the last two *inFamous* games were great in spite of their equally unlikeable frontman Cole MacGrath. Realising this has made it far easier for us to get excited about *Second Son* – the leading man will be a blank canvas, the game's morality system allowing you to play him as a pillar of justice or, if you'd rather, just a bit of a dick. With a whole host of powers instead of just electrical ones and a bigger, more impressive open world than its predecessors, the stage is set for Sucker Punch to step up to top-tier status – Guerrilla's game is already out and Naughty Dog and Polyphony won't be ready to show their hands for a while, so it's time for the open-world superhero silliness that Sucker Punch does so well to fill that gap.

ETA: March 2014

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: Capcom

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: Capcom

IN THREE WORDS: F2P Dark Souls

HYPF

Capcom's not been looking so good lately – *DmC* and *Lost Planet 3* fell way below expectations. *Dead Rising 3* did okay considering it was exclusive to Microsoft's new console and Ono stated recently that the cash isn't there to make *Street Fighter V* just yet. Still, hope is not lost – *Monster Hunter* continues to keep the company afloat and its free-to-play wing isn't doing so bad either, hence why this gorgeous fantasy-RPG is going down the F2P route on PS4. It's expected to go into public beta shortly, so you'll get to experience the *Dark Souls*-esque dungeon raids for yourselves. After *Dragon's Dogma*, we're hopeful that this will be all kinds of excellent.

ETA: 2014

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft

IN THREE WORDS: Information Is Power

HYPE

Since you've probably had *Watch Dogs* on pre-order since last year, the best we can tell you right now is to stay strong – it won't be long now until the entire world is at the mercy of your mobile. *Assassin's Creed IV's* watery open world made it clear just how great the jump from PS3 to PS4 really is, but a realistic city is even more of a showcase. As such, it's a kick in the teeth for Ubisoft that *inFamous* is likely to get there first, but the two games are thematically different enough to ensure that there's room for two. Is it the amazing PS4 showpiece we all want?

ETA: Q1 2014



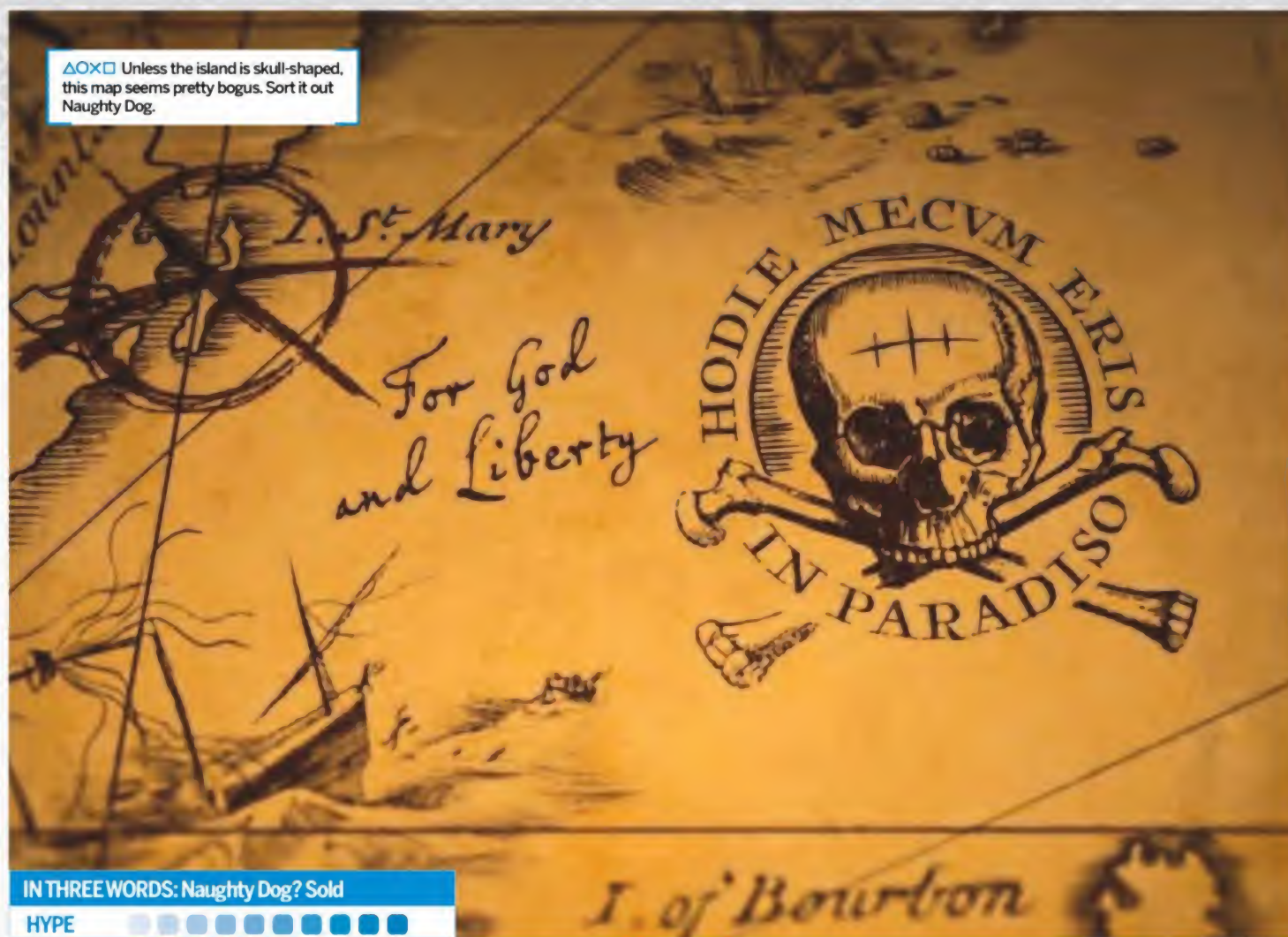
FAMILY CHOICE

IN THREE WORDS: Blocky Creative Destruction

HYPE

Want to really put your PS4 through its paces? Then look elsewhere. While its retro-inspired style might not be particularly impressive, *Minecraft*'s scale and potential most certainly is – this is a game where pretty much anything is possible with enough time, thought and patience, and it's this that has seen the game rise to become the biggest indie game on the planet and one of the biggest games, period. Expect even more social interaction and creativity from the PS4 version – your Share button was basically made for this. Time to get involved...

ETA: Q2 2014



IN THREE WORDS: Naughty Dog? Sold

HYPE

UNCHARTED

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony

IF EVER A GAME COULD SELL CONSOLES, IT'S NAUGHTY DOG'S PS4 DEBUT. NOW WE JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT...

There was never any doubt that Sony would bring its flagship exclusive to PS4 and sure enough, the first teaser trailer dropped within hours of the console going on sale. There's a little info to be gleaned from the footage – while the route shown on the map is one followed by Sir Francis Drake, a prequel that benches Nathan seems unlikely, so perhaps a game that spans different eras is what we have to look forward to. We're not expecting it to be called *Uncharted 4*, as Sony will want all the new additions to the family to feel at home with this, the PS4 debut of the biggest PlayStation game of the bunch.

ETA: TBA



DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

DEVELOPER: BioWare PUBLISHER: EA

IN THREE WORDS: Back On Track

HYPE

By all accounts, *Dragon Age II* was rubbish. The scaled-back world and simple combat simply didn't hold up. But BioWare is listening, and it's acting on criticisms of its last game to get *Dragon Age* back where it belongs – on (or at least near) the top of the RPG heap. It has its work cut out going up against new darling *The Witcher*, but everything we've seen so far points to a vast and open adventure with the typical focus on choice and morality. Plus you'll probably be able to sleep with everyone in your party, and that's always a bonus. Sort of.

ETA: Q3 2014



HELLDIVERS

DEVELOPER: Arrowhead PUBLISHER: Sony

IN THREE WORDS: Cross-platform Co-op Shooter

HYPE

Not every game can be a *Killzone* or a *Gran Turismo*. That in mind, Sony has done well to identify and fill the twin-stick-shooter-shaped gap in PS4's line-up with this, a game that perfectly encapsulates the cross-platform nature of Sony's plans. It's coming not only to PS4 but to PS3 and Vita as well, with all three versions playable together in any combination. While a twin-stick shooter in and of itself is no new thing, this multi-format approach is – expect to see more of this from Sony going forward.

ETA: 2014

I CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY...

TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION



Ever since that first announcement gameplay trailer, *The Division*

has been easily my most anticipated PS4 game. It fuses shooter sensibilities with RPG mechanics and an emphasis on co-op – the last game I played that did that was *Borderlands 2*, and that's one of my favourite games of the last generation. It'll be interesting to see whether a serious game in the same vein will captivate me for the I-don't-even-wanna-know-how-long I put into Gearbox's frequently hilarious game, but the setting is neat and the visuals are insane. It's got a lot to live up to, but Ubisoft doesn't tend to slap the *Tom Clancy* brand on just any old rubbish – this is going to be something very special indeed.

The recent showcase for the Snowdrop engine made it perfectly clear just how advanced this new tech is, too. Lighting, smoke, reflections and just about every other environmental effect all interact with one another to create the closest thing to photorealism we've seen on PS4 so far. And although graphics obviously aren't everything, the immersion such a technological leap can add to an experience like this should not be underestimated.

Will it live up to the hype? No, of course not – no game that has the hopes of an entire generation on its shoulders ever can, right? And when people are constantly finding ways to criticise games so far-reaching and universally impressive as even *Grand Theft Auto V*, a new IP surely doesn't stand a chance.

That's not going to stop us clinging blindly to the hope that *The Division* will be The Best Of All The Things, though, and on paper, it already is. Fingers crossed the game is far enough along that someone will stick a controller in my hand at E3 this year...

LUKE ALBIGÉS



PLANETSIDE 2

DEVELOPER: Sony PUBLISHER: Sony

△×□ Imagine *Battlefield*, but way bigger and in space. That's pretty much *PlanetSide 2* in a nutshell...



IN THREE WORDS: MMO FPS OMG

HYPE

Free-to-play is just starting to take off on PS4 and to be fair, it's not off to a terrible start. *War Thunder* is in a good place, *Warframe* is entertaining enough and *DCUO* is as strong as ever – it's only really *Blacklight* letting the side down. Not that that'll matter for long, with Sony's own free online shooter set to make it irrelevant any day now anyway. *PlanetSide* is an online FPS on a scale that makes *Battlefield* look like four-player *GoldenEye*, with thousands of players involved in every battle. It'll be interesting to see what this does to sales of next year's *COD*, that's for sure.

ETA: Q2 2014

WONDER FLICK

DEVELOPER: Level-5 PUBLISHER: TBA



IN THREE WORDS: Level-5's PS4 Debut

HYPE

If you liked *Ni No Kuni* then you're going to love this. With Square pushing and pulling the JRPG in all directions, Level-5 has established itself as a master of the traditional – *Dragon Quest VIII*, *Rogue Galaxy* and more recently its Studio Ghibli collaboration all take cues from the 16-bit classics, which actually makes the games stand out. Cutesy visuals and traditional combat are the backbone, but there are reports of more social features in this apparently free-to-play RPG.

ETA: Q2 2014



Since Capcom clearly has no plans to do anything new with the *Mega Man* licence, creator Keiji Inafune took matters into his own hands and put a call to arms out on Kickstarter around *Mighty No 9*, a *Mega Man* game in all but name. It's a hardcore platform-shooter just like momma (read: Capcom) used to make and since it met virtually all of its stretch goals, it's now coming to PS4. Between this and fellow Kickstarter project *Mega Man: The Board Game*, it's a good time to be a fan of the Blue Bomber, even if his actual comeback still isn't anywhere in sight.

ETA: Q4 2014

FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

DEVELOPER: Square Enix PUBLISHER: Square Enix



IN THREE WORDS: Even Prettier MMO

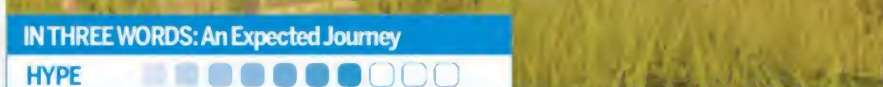
HYPE

A shinier version of a game you're already playing might not seem that exciting, but *FFXIV* is an exception. The game seems and improve every few months via updates – even if you played the PC or PS3 version at launch and have since hung up the tunic, there's all the content from the 2.1 patch and another expansion due by the time this PS4 debut goes live, making it a perfect time to go back or jump in for the first time. It's on a par with the PC version in terms of visuals, plus you can hook up a mouse and keyboard and it's exactly the same.

ETA: April 2014

LEGO THE HOBBIT

DEVELOPER: TT Games PUBLISHER: Warner Bros



IN THREE WORDS: An Expected Journey

HYPE

There are no two ways about it – TT Games has made Lego cool again. Ever since it got its hands on the *Star Wars* licence and combined blocky recreations of classic characters and locations with family-friendly gameplay, the template has changed little but you'll find few who will complain about that. So if you're down with all things Tolkien, here's another 40 hours of stud farming and comedy that you'll want to add to the list.

ETA: Q2 2014



△×□ Potentially being delayed until 2015 isn't too surprising, considering the scope and ambition Ubisoft is going for.

FALLING DOWN

We're not expecting destruction on a *Red Faction* level. But seeing as how walls and buildings can be riddled with holes, it'd be a bit odd if they didn't come down too.

WOUNDING SMG +3

While so many shooters use real-world weapons, *The Division* instead follows *Borderlands 2*'s lead, with fictional weapons allowing for rare loot drops.

TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Massive PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

If there's one game – just one game – that serves to highlight what 'next-gen' really means, it's *The Division*. Ubisoft's co-op shooter shares some DNA with *Destiny* in that both offer open worlds to explore and destroy in the company of friends, the key difference being that Ubisoft's game takes place in a post-disaster New York City. Attention to detail is ludicrous and again, the emphasis is on multiplayer being a part of the single-player experience – players will happen upon other groups and individuals who may be friendly or hostile and it's up to you to resolve each different situation that presents itself.

ETA: Q4 2014

IN THREE WORDS: This Is Next-gen

HYPE 

THE SPIRIT OF TOM CLANCY IS ALIVE AND KICKING IN THIS AMBITIOUS MMO-SHOOTER FROM UBISOFT, WHEN IT SHOWS UP, AT LEAST...





HYPE

DEVELOPER: Young Horses **PUBLISHER:** Young Horses

ETA: 01 2014

AS IF THE FIRST GAME WASN'T TRAUMATIC ENOUGH FOR HER, LARA CROFT IS SET TO MAKE HER RETURN. A FEW MORE TOMBS WOULDN'T GO AMISS THIS TIME. MIND

DEVELOPER: Crystal Dynamics **PUBLISHER:** Square Enix

ETA: 2014

HYPE



DEVELOPER: Hello Games

PUBLISHER: Hello Games

IS THIS INDIE SPACE GEM THE MOST AMBITIOUS GAME ON THIS LIST?

HYPE

ETA: 2014

THERE IS NO WAY I CAN DECIDE ON ONE



The amount of great stuff on the way is crazy. How do I decide?

Being a huge horror nerd, I loved *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* back in the day, so I'm also greatly looking forward to *SOMA*, the next piece of demented brilliance from Frictional Games. It looks to be bringing more first-person scares, but this time in a science fiction setting that already looks terrifying.

No Man's Sky is fascinating, and if it lives up to what the developer is promising, could totally redefine how we think of both open-world and indie games. I can't help but be a bit cynical at this point, but I can't wait to see how it turns out.

SAM SMITH



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

DEVELOPER: DICE
PUBLISHER: EA

Battlefront is one of the great lost franchises of the PS2 era – what's not to love about online deathmatches with a *Star Wars* twist? And who better to handle the rebirth of this series than DICE, a studio that knows online multiplayer better than pretty much any other developer. Unless it's a *Battlefield* reskin, we struggle to believe that *Battlefront* will be finished this year. But having played the previous games, we know that some things are worth waiting for.

ETA: 2014

IN THREE WORDS: Battlefield With Stormtroopers

HYPE



MIRROR'S EDGE

DEVELOPER: DICE
PUBLISHER: EA

Seeing as DICE has had to spend the last three months getting its last game working properly, we doubt it has had much time to work on its other projects. And even then, you have to assume that development of the next *Battlefield* and applying its shooter know-how to the *Star Wars* universe would all take precedence over this sequel to a cult hit. It's good to know that DICE still has Faith, but even 2015 seems like a long shot.

ETA: 2015

IN THREE WORDS: Unexpected Platforming Sequel

HYPE



THE EVIL WITHIN

DEVELOPER: Tango Gameworks PUBLISHER: Bethesda

Survival horror has lost its way somewhat in recent years and since the original *Resident Evil* boom that made the genre cool, constant one-upmanship has led it dangerously close to action game territory – cover shooting, boulder punching, cheap scares... it's all par for the course these days. *Resi* creator Shinji Mikami is keen to bring back the glory days, though, and *The Evil Within* is his way of doing it – a classic horror game where you can't just suplex extra ammo out of enemies and every scenario is as grim and hopeless as it should be. You might need to bring your own Jill Sandwiches to this horrible picnic...

ETA: Q2 2014

IN THREE WORDS: Survival Horror Reborn

HYPE



MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR

DEVELOPER: Monolith PUBLISHER: Warner Bros

IN THREE WORDS: Ambitious LOTR Prequel

HYPE

You'd be forgiven for not jumping out of your seat with excitement at the announcement of a new *Lord Of The Rings* game – for such a prominent fantasy franchise, gaming spin-offs have been generally horrible when it seems like it should be so easy to get it right. So while the lack of many familiar faces in *Shadow Of Mordor* seems to be troubling some people, we're fully behind the decision. There's far more creative freedom with fresh characters and a new setting than to be found in retreading familiar narrative arcs, plus the duality of a lead character who is seemingly part-wraith makes for some extremely interesting gameplay.

ETA: 2014

MAD MAX

DEVELOPER: Avalanche Studios PUBLISHER: Warner Bros



IN THREE WORDS: Fallout With Australians

HYPE

What's the one thing you'd want to your name at the end of the world? A big gun? Try again. Some kind of shelter? Please. In fact, if you answered anything other than 'a bitching set of wheels' then Avalanche would like to politely tell you how wrong you are. Based on a movie franchise that has been dormant for nearly 30 years (although there's a new one in production, starring Tom Hardy), this adventure promises the environments of *Fallout*, the carnage of *Carmageddon* and the antics of *Just Cause* in a single package. The studio has no trouble making action entertaining, and with the supposed involvement of *God Of War 2* director Cory Balrog, this could turn out to be a really explosive dark horse.

ETA: 2014



DRIVECLUB

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios **PUBLISHER:** Sony

Aside from Sony's insistence on that bloody hashtag in front of the title, *Driveclub* is looking better by the day. Delaying the game might have disappointed early adopters that wanted to race without fear of police intervention, but it's clear that it was for the best – visuals have been vastly improved over the last few months and the social aspect appears to have grown from gimmick to an integral part of the experience. With *Gran Turismo* still busy on PS3 and no real competition on PS4 for a racer like this, *Driveclub* – when it shows up – will have pretty much all of the racing fans to itself. The connected aspect is what made Autolog in *Need For Speed* a reason to keep coming back, so hopefully *Driveclub* will have even more of that awesome community spirit.

ETA: Q2 2014



KINGDOM HEARTS III

DEVELOPER: Square Enix

PUBLISHER: Square Enix

This one has been on our wishlist since the moment *KHIII*'s credits started to roll, so to see it finally confirmed is wonderful. While the saccharine Square/Disney crossover RPG might not be to everyone's tastes, each game has been a real showcase for the potential of its chosen platform – we look forward to seeing Disney's brightest stars make the leap from big screen to PS4 without the slightest drop in visual fidelity. Sadly, so we're not expecting to see anything more on it until TGS...

ETA: 2015

STARBOUND

DEVELOPER: Chucklefish Games **PUBLISHER:** Chucklefish Games

IN THREE WORDS: *Terraria In Space*

HYPE



DAYLIGHT

DEVELOPER: Zombie Studios **PUBLISHER:** Atlus

Horror games lose all impact once the player knows what's coming, so this one sees fit to mix things up – its procedurally generated hellholes will be different for everyone and on every play, so you'll never know when the scares are coming. Frights will need to be varied and freeform if this approach is to work – and having ex-journalist and *Mass Effect* blemish Jessica Chobot on writing duty doesn't exactly fill us with confidence, either – but the idea is sound.

ETA: Q1 2014



KINGDOM COME: DELIVERANCE

DEVELOPER: Warhorse Studios **PUBLISHER:** TBA

Warhorse Studios already managed to get several million dollars out of a private investor but when it took its new game to Kickstarter to prove that the audience was there, it ended up drowning in money. The campaign soared past its target in just 36 hours and continued to rise, meaning work on the grounded historical RPG continues unhindered. It's a bold approach but the rapturous crowd-sourcing response certainly shows that people *do* want to play an RPG without all that fantasy silliness.

ETA: 2015



I CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY...

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN



Where to begin? I'm a monster fan of the franchise as a whole; all its silliness, all the little idiosyncracies that make it unique, everything. Not only does *Ground Zeroes* look superb, but *The Phantom Pain* is genuinely looking like one of the most ambitious games ever made. If the whole open-world stealth cocktail tastes as good as it looks then it'll surely prove to be The Game That Changed Stealth Forever, or something like that.

It's the mystery surrounding the whole thing that's making me hot under the collar though. After everything that has happened to Big Boss up to this point, you can just tell that everything is building towards the supposed fall from grace that Solid Snake has to put a stop to in the original *Metal Gear*. Kojima is a sentimental bugger at heart so expect everything to reference other games in the series.

Big Boss (he prefers Jack) is the only *MGS* character that I can think of that has actually enjoyed some believable character progression over the years. In my eyes *MGS3: Snake Eater* was nothing short of a divine intervention, and with it came this tortured soul who has been manipulated his whole life into doing questionable things for his country. You can look forward in the chronology to when he goes off the rails and understand totally. To be sent to kill the woman you love (in a platonic sense) and tarnish her name in the process would suck, wouldn't it?

Back to *MGSV*, the trailers we've seen have given us so much to gossip about. What's going on with the hospital bit? Are Big Boss and Ocelot pals? Child soldiers? Liquid Snake as a nipper? Nanomachines? SNAAAAKE????!!!!

So yeah, *MGSV* looks like it might be the best thing to ever happen to me; read into that however you like.

STEVE HOLMES

△×□ The nine-minute Red Band trailer for *The Phantom Pain* might just be the best thing we've ever seen.

SNEAK OVER THERE

The shift to an open world is the biggest change for the franchise since the leap to 3D with the original *MGS*. Open stealth still works – just look at *Dishonored*.

"OPEN-WORLD STEALTH IS A BOLD APPROACH, AND WE REALLY HOPE IT PAYS OFF"



ON-SITE PROCUREMENT

Sneaky's fairly used to going in unarmed and picking stuff up as he goes. With an entire open world to explore, just think of all the tat he'll be able to find...

IN THREE WORDS: Open World Stealth

HYPE



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions

PUBLISHER: Konami

We won't spend too many of our precious words here discussing Kojima's missing link when there are so many elsewhere in this issue, but suffice to say that both *Ground Zeroes* and *The Phantom Pain* should be on any true gamer's radar. These two titles more or less complete the *Metal Gear* timeline, meaning Konami will have to either finally retire Snake (Kojima has famously referred to every *Metal Gear* game since *MGS2* as his last), or plug a tiny time gap if the main series is to continue. Open-world stealth is a bold approach, and we really hope it pays off.



ETA:2015

50 BIGGEST PS4 GAMES

FINAL FANTASY XV

DEVELOPER: Square Enix **PUBLISHER:** Square Enix

IN THREE WORDS: Action-Heavy RPG Sequel

HYPE

ACTIVE TIME BATTLE

Gone are the days when RPGs were about selecting attacks from menus then waiting your turn – it's all direct interaction these days, and that's fine.

Since it's cool to hate *FFXIII* and not everyone enjoys MMOs, all eyes fall on *FFXV* to restore the *Final Fantasy* franchise to the throne it earned in its PSone heyday. The footage Square Enix has released so far paints a picture of a far more action-heavy game than its predecessors, almost more in line with *Lightning Returns* than the traditional ATB system. But given the kind of cinematic battles and spectacular acrobatics this facilitates, we're fine with that. Having started life as *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* for PS3, the game has already been in development for years but moving it to PS4 has meant that we're unlikely to see it this side of 2015.

ETA: 2015

ΔOX□ The action in the *FFXV* trailer is crazy, and *Lightning Returns* gives us hope that Square Enix can pull it off.

THE CREW

DEVELOPER: Ivory Tower

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

IN THREE WORDS: Pan-American Racing Tour

HYPE

You probably haven't heard of developer Ivory Tower, but you've more than likely played a game one of the team worked on – many of the staff came across from Eden Games (*Test Drive*, *V-Rally*) or have worked on big names like *Need For Speed*. For this, the new French team's debut, Ubisoft has tasked the studio with shrinking down the USA and racing from coast to coast. *Driver* developer Ubisoft Reflections is helping out on the game too, so while it might not seem like the most exciting game in the world at first glance, the pedigree is there to make this something special – we're always happy to have more arcade racers, especially if it can encourage *Burnout* to come out of hiding at long last.

ETA: Q3 2014



GUILTY GEAR XRD -SIGN-

DEVELOPER: Arc System Works PUBLISHER: Sega

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FIGHTING GAME WE'VE EVER SEEN

3D characters fighting on a 2D plane has been established as a standard thanks to brawling benchmark *Street Fighter IV*, but Arc System Works is taking it to the next level with the long-awaited return of the *Guilty Gear* series. Character models are so crisp and colourful that they could easily pass for high-res sprites, so it's not until the camera spins, pans and cuts around them that you even notice that these are rendered models. It's beautiful, just as we hoped the return of this hardcore fighter would be – *BlazBlue* has filled the gap just fine, but while it might bear a lot of similarities to *Guilty Gear*, there's no substitute for the real thing. *Xrd* is on location test in Japanese arcades right now, with a PS4 version due to arrive later in the year.

ETA: Q4 2014

Techland is one of the most hit-and-miss developers on the scene today but when it gets things right, it gets them very right – just look at the awesome *Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger*. Its real money-maker, though, has been *Dead Island*, a game that managed to create a huge buzz around itself with a controversial trailer that had pretty much nothing to do with the buggy, mildly entertaining mess that was the game itself. Still, millions of people lapped it up and it got an equally shonky sequel, with the team now riffing on the ideas laid out by *Dead Island* and fusing the zombie apocalypse setting with the high-octane parkour platforming of cult hit *Mirror's Edge*. It certainly looks the business – we're just somewhat wary that it could be just another one of the erratic studio's misfires, but we'll reserve full judgement until we've had a play for ourselves.

DYING LIGHT

DEVELOPER: Techland PUBLISHER: Warner Bros

IN THREE WORDS: Parkour With Zombies

HYPE



ETA: Q2 2014

EA SPORTS UFC

DEVELOPER: EA Canada

PUBLISHER: EA Sports

IN THREE WORDS: Photorealistic Pain Simulator

HYPE

THQ's *UFC* games were among the last generation's most surprising successes – after years without a good MMA game, the official licence and rock-solid mechanics came together to create a trio of games that were superb. EA's effort took a different tack but offered an equally technical digital approximation of men smashing each other to pieces. With the power of PS4 behind it and more realistic models, animation and blow connection than ever, expect to wince more at the bone-crunching strikes and grapples in this than you will at any other game this year.

ETA: Q2 2014

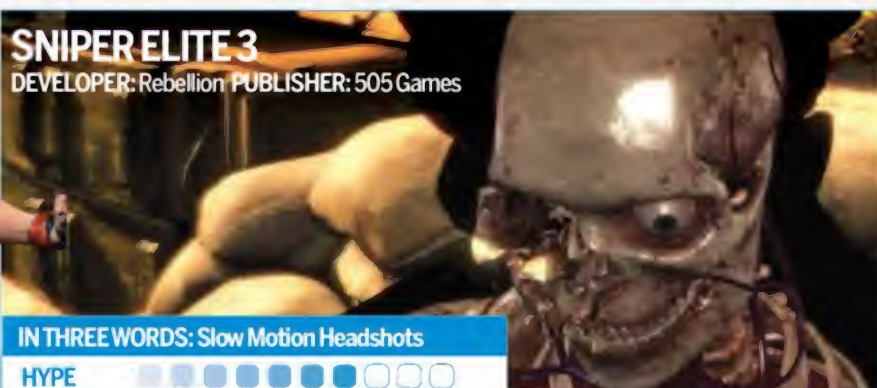


SNIPER ELITE 3

DEVELOPER: Rebellion PUBLISHER: 505 Games

IN THREE WORDS: Slow Motion Headshots

HYPE



We really want *Sniper Elite* to be good again. The PS2 original stands up as one of our favourite new IPs of the era, taking *Max Payne*'s slow-motion killcams to the next level by rewarding well-placed long range shots with a glorious cut-scene that follows the rifle round all the way from barrel to brain. But with its recent sequel, Rebellion fell foul of the same pitfall as its rival title, *Sniper: Ghost Warrior*, with machine guns and mass conflict removing the emphasis from the one-shot-one-kill thrill of the first game. Hopefully, this PS4 follow-up will return to that glorious satisfaction of making every bullet count.

ETA: 2014





ETA 20 MARCH

DEV KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

PUB KONAMI

TWITTER @HIDEO_KOJIMA_EN

Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes

Only two hours long and still the best game on PS4 so far? Yeah, Kojima's still got it...

Metal Gear Solid is ridiculous. It's remarkable, when you think about it, that people have such love, such passion, for a story that involves characters called Decoy Octopus, Fatman and Big Boss. But we do love it, in part for that very reason. *Metal Gear Solid* is a rare thing in games: a series straight from the heart, in this case that of Hideo Kojima. The man clearly loves what he does, and it shows, coming through in games that have personality, great gameplay and iconic (not to mention bizarrely-named) characters.

Ground Zeroes opens in suitably unobtrusive fashion, with Skull Face (because he has a burnt face that looks like a skull), the leader of shadowy organization XOF (that's FOX, Snake's old unit, backwards,

follows on almost immediately. Snake/Big Boss has to infiltrate an American black site on Cuban soil to rescue Chico and Cipher (bad guys) agent Paz, captured by her own organization under suspicion of being a spy.

That's all you get in terms of setup: infiltrate this camp and rescue these two people. Sounds simple, and it is. The game dumps you on the outskirts, and it's up to you how to continue. We see here how *Metal Gear Solid* has changed. Gone are the relatively linear areas of before. This is a stealth sandbox, a large open stage with multiple ways to approach and accomplish each objective.

Control is again similar to the console version of *Peace Walker*, with a few refinements. Square sends Snake into a quick dive in any direction,

buttons, D-pad changing weapons and items and face buttons making Snake crouch, reload and perform actions.

It feels like a *Metal Gear* game, and while that may sound arbitrary (and obvious), it's incredibly important. Long-time fans will know that feeling, the incredible solidness (pun intended) in both design and mechanics that tells you this is a game made by people who both very good at and love what they do. Snake can interact with practically the whole environment, peeking round corners, vaulting over ledges and climbing into the back of enemy vehicles to catch a free ride. Your mobility and ease of movement around the world makes it easy to visualise potential routes through enemy-infested terrain.

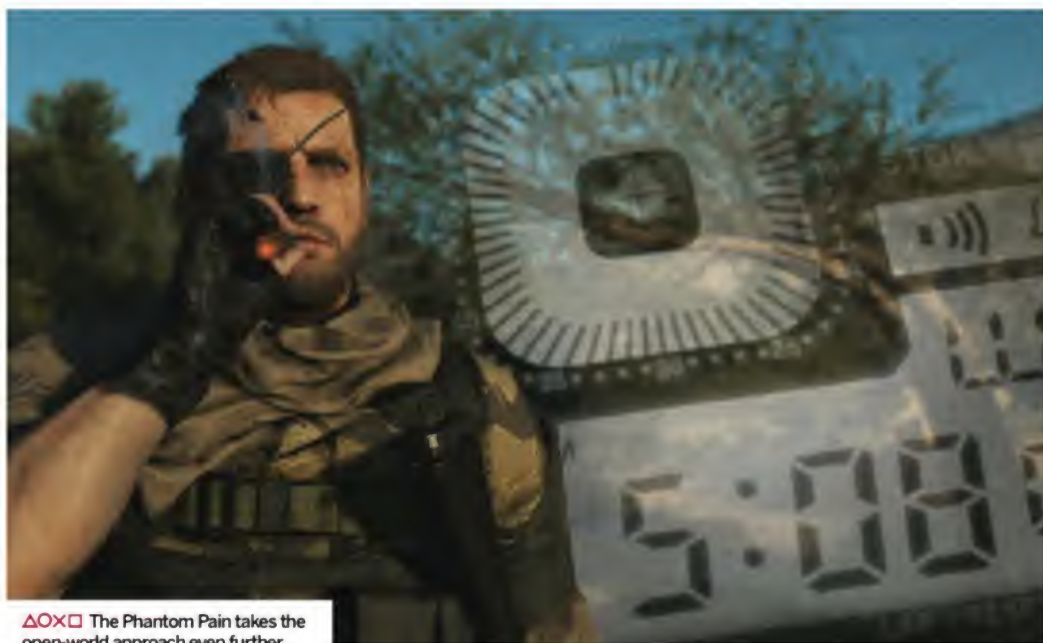
Planning ahead is more important than ever now thanks to the far more open design. This is aided by your trusty binoculars, which can now mark guards and items of interest by focusing on them for a second or two. It's exactly the same mechanic we've seen in games like *Far Cry 3*, but it's a bloody good mechanic so we don't particularly mind. Foes stop being tracked if you get too far away too, adding a bit of balance.

Getting about the base without being seen at all is tough. There are a ton of guards about, often

"GONE ARE THE RELATIVELY LINEAR AREAS OF BEFORE... THIS IS A STEALTH SANDBOX"

see) chatting with prisoner Chico, who some of you may remember from the excellent *Peace Walker*. A quick roundup of *Peace Walker* is included on the main menu of *Ground Zeroes*, but it's worth playing all the same: not only is it great, but the story this time

excellent for getting out of sight at the last second. It's such a great, integral addition that you'll start to wonder how you ever coped without it. Otherwise, this is business as usual: the usual third-person shooter layout of aim and shoot on the shoulder



△×□ The Phantom Pain takes the open-world approach even further...

"YOU COULD PROBABLY BLAST THROUGH IT IN TEN MINUTES"

➤ patrolling in pairs, and search towers dot the premises. Your best option 95 per cent of the time is still the silenced tranquilliser pistol, which yes, still seems a bit game-breaking. Sure, you can just not use it, but peppering guards from afar with darts is still the easy way out of most situations, sadly.

Elsewhere, CQC again works similarly to *Peace Walker*. Get behind an enemy, grab him round the neck and you will have three options: interrogate him for information (revealed item locations get marked on your map, a helpful touch),

choke him until he is unconscious or kill him with a quick stab to the neck. Pulling a gun on an unsuspecting foe from behind again allows you to hold them up, giving similar results. Bodies can be picked up and hidden, a necessity if you don't want other guards finding your leftovers and raising an alarm.

Of course, if you get spotted (or if you just can't be arsed with stealth), going in all guns blazing is still entirely possible, perhaps even too much so. A large complaint of *MGS* is that, at least on default difficulty settings, it's been too

SECOND SCREEN

How a tablet (or phone) can help you sneak



MAP

Probably the most useful application for a second screen, players will be able to use their tablet or phone to display a map of the area.

IDROID

The second screen actually functions as Snake's digital terminal, iDroid. Besides a map, there will be stats, progress and other functions.

MUSIC

Peace Walker let Snake equip a Walkman and play custom music – it seems like the kind of thing Kojima would bring back...

SECRETS

Kojima is a mad fellow and he loves to hide secrets and fourth-wall-breaking references in his games. What better place to hide them?



△OX□ Hopefully, the horse will be able to hide in a cardboard box.

easy to disregard stealth altogether and go in full Rambo. We'd argue that the proper way to play a *Metal Gear* game is to up the difficulty to a point where getting seen really does mean death, but it's a shame that it still feels a bit too forgiving at a standard level.

The most glaring example of this is a new mechanic, giving you a second of slow-motion whenever spotted to take out the guard before he raises the alarm. Hitting L2 in this brief moment will automatically snap your aim to the guard in question, and taking him down is usually far too easy. It's one nod to accessibility too far, making it way more forgiving than a stealth game should be. Players may come to rely on it like a crutch, removing the need for careful planning and execution that makes the game so fun. Luckily, Kojima and company obviously know that 'Snake Time' will be divisive, and it's incredibly easy to turn off in the options menu. Players also earn bonuses in their mission rankings for never using the mechanic, so the pros will come to ignore it for that reason alone.

Snow is equipped with an iDroid, a device that in no conceivable way could ever exist in 1975, the year the game is set. This holographic marvel displays the map, mission objectives, collected

intel and audio tapes. Interestingly, bringing up the iDroid doesn't pause the game, and players can still move about when they use it – don't worry, there's still a proper pause button, too. Audio tapes can be played in the background while controlling Snake, saving some time. This non-stop approach applies to the Codec too: there isn't one. Instead, pressing the radio button always calls Miller, who offers advice on whatever is nearby. Again, the game doesn't pause while these little chats take place. We were happy to sit through 15-minute Codec chats about whether love can bloom on a battlefield back in the day but today, we aren't sure whether our poor minds could maintain attention that long. Now, the whole game is fast-paced – a wise, fresh decision.

Unfortunately, that fast pace applies to everything, including the story. This is a very short tale – it's undeniable. *Ground Zeroes* is to *Metal Gear Solid V* what the tanker section was to *Metal Gear Solid 2*: a lengthy prologue that introduces the characters and concepts while setting up the story. Ten years ago, this would have been part of the main game. Today, it is a separate entity, costing almost as much as a full game. We can't help but wonder if DLC and digital distribution had been prominent



△OX□ There's a lot of explaining to be done. Hope you like cut-scenes...



△OX□ Snake looking like a badass, as usual. What a guy.

a decade ago, whether the *MGS2* tanker would have been the same.

It shouldn't take most people any more than two hours to see off the main mission, and once you know the layout and order of the thing you could probably blast through it in ten minutes. To be fair though, there is a lot of other stuff to see and do – this may not be a long experience, but it is a wide one. There are a bunch of ways to explore the base and complete the mission, and die-hards will enjoy trying to do the entire thing undetected. There are exposition-heavy guard conversations to overhear, audio tapes to find, and nine hidden XOF badges that may or may not unlock something if you get them all – we don't want to spoil anything. The first time we finished the main story, it took us 90 minutes. Going back to the main menu, we saw our total game completion: nine per cent. Short it may be, but there is a huge amount of replay value here.

Ground Zeroes also includes five side-ops, new missions set on the same map that will each take around 30-45 minutes. Some are action-focussed while another tasks you with taking out two specific targets. The fifth is the platform-exclusive *Deja Vu* mission, with the player re-creating various scenes from the original *Metal Gear*

► game. Make sure you do them all... you'll be rewarded.

The game looks lovely on PS4, Konami's new Fox Engine really singing for the first time on the powerful hardware. A *Metal Gear Solid* game with amazing graphics shouldn't be news by now, but once again the series is at the forefront of current visual technology. From obvious things like the character models, closer to photorealism than ever, to subtle touches like cloth flapping in the wind or some of the

appeal, but hearing a more realistic, nuanced Snake is an interesting take on the character all the same.

Fans that remember *MGS4*, a game that was approximately five per cent actual gameplay, will be pleased to hear that *Ground Zeroes* only features two proper cut-scenes, one at the beginning and another at the end of the game. Of course, considering the length of the main mission, this is understandable, and *The Phantom Pain* will likely have far more to go with its full length.

"THE ENDING IS ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING, EXCITING CUT-SCENES WE'VE EVER SEEN IN A VIDEOGAME"

best-looking rain we've seen in a game, the whole thing is wonderfully realised and extremely pretty. As is quickly becoming the norm, the PS4 version is considerably prettier than the Xbox One version, too.

It also sounds great, with the return of some iconic sound effects and another great soundtrack. The English voice acting is excellent, although one aspect may take a while to get used to for fans. While practically every returning character is voiced by the same actor as before, our main man has seen a change in vocal chords. The need for full, motion-tracked acting and facial scanning apparently led Kojima to ditch the gravelly tones of David Hayter in favour of a more considered performance by Kiefer Sutherland. You might have heard of him.

Initially, the change is extremely jarring. If you've been playing *MGS* since 1998 like us lot, Hayter is Snake, it's as simple as that. Kiefer really does put in a good performance though, world-weary and tired while retaining that gravel that makes the character. Once you put Jack Bauer out of your mind and take the time to get used to it, you might find yourself quite fond of this new Snake. We love Hayter as much as anyone, but as the years progressed, his performances became more of a caricature: deeper and more rugged with each game. We know, that's the

Thing is, nobody in the industry does cut-scenes as well as Kojima – the fact we still love *MGS4* is testament to this fact. The ending is one of the most thrilling, exciting cut-scenes we've seen in a videogame, also containing one of the few genuinely disturbing moments we've ever experienced in the medium.

Still, this is the least that Kojima has relied on cut-scenes since he started, with most exposition and plot movement happening as you play, *Half-Life* style. It's more proof that Kojima knows the industry, and while he is still neck-deep in his own idiosyncrasies (and the game is all the better for it), he clearly understands the direction that games are going. Keeping players engaged is more important than ever.

The one huge, glaring issue with *Ground Zeroes* is the price. For £10, this would be the easiest recommendation ever. For £20, we'd still argue that you get more than your money's worth. Once you reach the £30 mark, though, we start to wonder. Sure, you can replay it a ton of different ways, but this is still a very short prologue to a game that we aren't going to be seeing for some time. We are huge *Metal Gear* fans, and even if we feel ripped off, we are still going to buy it. But we are not the people Konami needs to convince. All but the most hardcore will question paying almost full price for a few hours of entertainment in an age when a £5 indie game can



△×× Purists needn't worry – it's still possible to do pure stealth runs.



PLAY VIDEO

Check out the epic trailer for *The Phantom Pain*, with Play commentary!

YouTube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK



provide hundreds. Claims of *Ground Zeroes* being a glorified demo are wildly exaggerated, but the core message is the same: Konami is charging too much money for this. It's an excellent game, a wonderful combination of classic *Metal Gear* with great new mechanics, and getting a 100 per cent completion rating will take much longer than two hours, but the issue of price is just too large to ignore, especially with a £10 premium on the PS4 version.

It will be extremely interesting to see how people judge *Ground Zeroes*: as a game, product, or combination of both. All we know is we can't wait to play through it a few more times.

Sam Smith



EXPLAIN THE PAIN

The Phantom Pain is still a long way off, but our finest Metal Gear experts have broken it down the incredible trailer to explain exactly what is going on...



0:10 - We open with Miller explaining the ongoing conflict with Cipher – the Patriots faction headed by Major Zero, dedicated to taking down Militaires Sans Frontieres. Sounds like Cipher wants revenge: for Snake foiling their plans in *Peace Walker*? Or maybe for something he does in *Ground Zeroes*?

2:50 - "Afghanistan is a big place," Ocelot explains the mission to Snake as they approach a vast desert on horseback. Snake must first rescue Miller before rebuilding his army after a decade-long coma.



0:40 - Beautiful music accompanies a scene of torture, mute sniper Quiet (more on her later) undergoing electrocution, overseen by one Revolver Ocelot.



1:47 - The most disturbing scene, a woman thought to be Paz undergoing brutal, unanaesthetised surgery. Snake removes an object from her stomach: a blinking box adorned with a peace symbol... a bomb?



0:50 - Child soldiers is a theme Kojima has returned to many times throughout the series, Raiden's past in particular a prime example. Here we see young recruits being trained how to hold a rifle.

1:00 - More torture, in a prison camp this time, as Miller says he can still feel his lost arm and leg – the phantom pain of the title.



2:20 - Huey Emmerich, Otacon's dad and ally to Snake, is water boarded (a form of torture) by Ocelot and Miller. Why are they torturing an ally of Militaires Sans Frontieres? We'd imagine it has something to do with a Metal Gear...



3:52 - Our first glimpse of gameplay, as Snake explores on his horse. "A new breed of stealth" has him leaning off one side of the animal to avoid being seen. We also see real-time weather changes and drivable vehicles, such as tanks and jeeps.

4:50 - Snake drives to a high ledge and uses his binoculars to mark guards and scope out the area. It seems that planning your approach will be very important in this huge open world.



5:30 - Snake moves through an occupied village, leaping across rooftops to avoid searchlights and bad guys. It's thrilling stuff.

5:15 - We see the real-time day/night sequence of the game, as well as how smoking can speed up the passage of time. A nod to *Deadly Premonition*?

7:05 - Finally, we see "those that don't exist", the strange unit of mysterious, supernatural soldiers that no doubt will make up the bosses of the game. What's a *Metal Gear* game without crazy bosses, after all?



7:25 - Things come to a head as we see Snake escaping carrying Miller, shooting his way out and running to reach an extraction helicopter.

8:15 - The trailer reaches a climax as we are introduced to the hero, a man we all know well: John, Jack, Big Boss, but this time Punished Snake, a fallen legend. "Men become demons" reads the text, as we see the shrapnel 'horn' embedded into his head.



6:30 - We are introduced to a bunch of new and returning characters, including questionably-attired sniper Quiet, Eli, a child who we would bet a lot of money is really Liquid Snake, main antagonist XOF leader Skull Face, Huey Emmerich (this time not being tortured), strange old man 'Code Talker' and of course, Revolver Ocelot.



8:55 - Snake boards a small mech as we hear Ocelot talking about Cipher researching something in Africa: "a weapon to surpass Metal Gear." Well, it is in the game's title...

INTERVIEW

HIDEO KOJIMA

We sit down with the man behind the madness

This is the first game you've developed on next gen systems. What has the tech enabled you to do that you couldn't previously?

Before talking about next gen or current gen, our first aim for our next game was make an open world stealth game in the Fox Engine. We started making that for the current gen, and once the next-gen systems came in we started brushing it up so it could better fit the next-gen consoles.

In the past you've often claimed to be retiring from *Metal Gear*, but you always seem to come back. Why is this?

Metal Gear as a brand I want to continue, especially with me in a producer role. That said, I've challenged my staff members to step up to the role, but it's proven difficult. However, I'd be happy for other staff members to take over *Metal Gear*, I overlook it as a producer while working on something different.

To be completely honest, as soon as I say I'm making another *Metal Gear*, it's easier to get a budget and approval from the company, and with that it's easier to create something new and extraordinary.

***Ground Zeroes* is more accessible to new players in its mechanics. Is it tough balancing accessibility and continuity?**

I changed the method of storytelling this time. For people who played *Peace Walker*, players who know Chico and Paz will find it easier to relate to them. However, if it's people who haven't played *Peace Walker*, they will get a different emotional reaction, and this was an intentional decision on my part.

I wanted to make a game that, depending on the background info and experience the player has, the story will feel like something different. I wanted to have freedom on that part and intentionally set out to create it that way.

So, for example, the way we used to do things, we might have a ten minute cut-scene telling you what kind of a character Chico is, something that would make the player want to go rescue them. Now, that background information is portrayed through the game itself, or the audio diaries which we brought back from *Peace Walker*. Even if players don't know the characters, telling them to go rescue this young boy and girl will give an emotional reaction they can relate to. I didn't want to force this information into cut-scenes.

"I WANTED TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT JAPANESE HIGH-END GAMES ARE STILL WORTH PLAYING"

Shinkawa's art has become iconic among gamers. Do you think *Metal Gear Solid* would be as successful without it?

There were two *Metal Gear* games before we had Shinkawa. Back then, I hadn't met a designer that really satisfied my creative needs. If I wasn't

happy with something, the designer would go out to the bathroom and I'd jump on the PC and edit it myself!

When Shinkawa joined, he was so impressive with his skill and nerdy enthusiasm, he had a clear vision of the characters and world. I've been working with him for a long time now, and it still excites me every time. Without him, the world that has become *Metal Gear Solid* would have been completely different. Whether it would have sold or not, I have no idea.

***Ground Zeroes* seems to use single-camera shots in its cut-scenes, following the action with a continuous shot rather than cutting between viewpoints. What are the directorial reasons behind this?**

Ideally, I wanted to create a game where all the cut-scenes are one camera shot, and the camera moves from the gameplay to the cut-scene and back, seamlessly. So really, it's only one camera through the entire game.

What were the deciding factors behind casting Kiefer Sutherland after David Hayter had such a distinct voice?

Moving forward, I wanted to aim for having one actor perform every aspect of the character. For this time, we could get Kiefer's voice and facial capture but unfortunately not his motion capture. Moving forward, we want to get everything, movement, voice and face all together. We want one single human to get his voice, face and motion in the game and become the character.

How did you come to the decision to separate *MGSV* into two parts? Was it a personal or business decision?

I'll be honest, this wasn't necessarily a strategic move. *The Phantom Pain* is roughly 200 times



bigger than *Ground Zeroes*. A game that big wouldn't be ready for next-gen launch windows, and we didn't have any Japanese titles that would be available. At that time, the *Ground Zeroes* portion was almost complete and a lot of fans were asking for a prologue, so that's the decision we came to. That was the reasoning behind the move.

We've seen a phenomenon around the world, especially in Japan. Young people are losing interest in high-end games and focussing on mobile and social games. With the launch of next-gen, I wanted to show people that Japanese high-end games are still worth playing and big Japanese games still have a future.

Your personality and influences shine through in your games, especially your love of films. What other hobbies do you have that people might not know?

I always loved modelling, but when I got married my wife threw them all away! Plus, Shinkawa is far too good, so it annoys me that he is so much better than me! I'm considering going back to it after 20 years away.

I'm also thinking about taking cooking lessons. It's creating something, and I love doing so in any form. I'm not sure if anyone will eat what I cook though!

A MOMENT WITH YOJI SHINKAWA

Metal Gear Solid's incredible artist on his role in the franchise

"When I first played *Metal Gear*, I was in middle school. Then I was put in the position to be able to help create this series, that was a strange feeling! Back then when we were working on *MGS1*, there weren't too many military shooting games on PSone. It was something I wanted to play, the kind of game I wanted to create, and to be put in the position to do it was incredibly fortunate. Rather than thinking about whether it would have been successful, I think without my art it would have at least been different. I'm happy to be a part of it!"



"THE PHANTOM PAIN IS
ROUGHLY 200 TIMES BIGGER
THAN GROUND ZEROES"

FASHIONISTA

Red beanie and awkward rocker jacket? Someone has been shopping at Diesel.

FLAME ON!

We were suitably impressed with Delsin's powers – the combination of Smoke and Neon allows you to tackle situations as you see fit, with more to follow.

"IT'S LEGITIMATELY STUNNING TO LOOK AT AND PERFORMS SPLENDIDLY IN TERMS OF ADVERTISING THE PS4'S GRAPHICAL CAPABILITIES"



PLAY VIDEO

Watch the trailer on our YouTube channel or your free disc, with team commentary.

YouTube

www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

ETA 21 MARCH

DEV SUCKER PUNCH

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inFamous: Second Son

A new hero is born



Fittingly, for a series that's making the leap from PlayStation 3 to PlayStation 4, *inFamous: Second Son* is all about being bigger, faster and prettier than

what has come before it. Déjà vu is the obvious flavour when stepping into new hero Delsin Rowe's boots, with gameplay and controls feeling familiar and instinctual. Whether that's a good thing will depend on your view of *inFamous*'s PS3 outings.

Like previous protagonist Cole McGrath, Rowe is struggling with the responsibilities and attentions that come bundled with possessing the superhuman abilities of a Conduit (read: mutant). Are they a gift? Are they affliction? It's the same question that *X-Men* has been asking since the Sixties. Low marks for originality, then.

Higher marks for how developer Sucker Punch is attempting to tell the story within the visually

impressive open-world it has built as Rowe's playground, though. Our demo begins with Rowe, sporting aging-rocker jacket and identity-sapping beanie, having to choose between guiding fellow young Conduit Abigail 'Fetch' Walker down a road of redemption or corruption.

Corrupt her and she turns into a psychopath whose sole focus seems to be the complete and utter annihilation of anyone who speaks out against the Conduits – not least the Department of Unified Protection, a government-founded group formed to suppress Conduit activity. Redeem her and she becomes the ultimate symbol of co-habitation, intent on showing humans that they've nothing to fear from Conduits by embarking on a quest of good-natured vigilantism.

Your choice is made following a cut-scene in which Fetch is being berated for trying to take

matters into her hands, attracting unwanted attention and forcing Rowe into taking her under his wing. 'Redeem' and 'Corrupt' appear quite literally on-screen, with your choice having an instantaneous effect on your easily-influenced new protégée. Following your decision you're thrown into a mission that sets the tone for things to come.

The corrupt mission is the most fun of the two and plays more credibly into the heavy-handed comic book vibe emitted by Rowe, the world and the underlying themes of acceptance, fear and suspicion. Having caught wind of anti-Conduit protests taking place around the city, Fetch and Rowe set out to break up the gatherings of those they see as simple-minded, prejudiced low-lives and teach their leader a lesson.

This involves making your way across the city to protest groups marked on your mini-map, then



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SEATTLE PARKOUR

Delsin Rowe was born to run

With the way Rowe's Neon and Smoke traversal abilities work, scaling buildings isn't much of a challenge in *Second Son*. However, putting together good chains of roof-hopping and wall-scaling is both incredibly satisfying and visually incredible. The mission we played in which you follow the truck asks you to make your way as quickly as possible over a rooftop course set up like a skate park – record your slickest jumps, climbs and hops over monorail trains to share with your friends.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



A new approach to the standard bad/good moral compass.



The open environment of *Second Son*'s Seattle is gorgeous to look at.



Neon and Smoke abilities provide diverse options for tackling your opponents.



Rowe's powers make him faster and more agile than Cole McGrath.

debilitating the protesters and destroying the various banners and iconography that our 'heroes' have taken offence to. In the face of Rowe's powers, your victims don't stand a chance.

Said powers are split into two distinct sets: Smoke and Neon. Broadly speaking, Smoke is superior at short range, encouraging an all-out aggression approach that's better at dealing a lot of damage quickly. Chains tipped with flame allow you to jump straight into the middle of a group and take them out quickly, all the better if you materialise and throw a smoke grenade from the palm of your hand first to soften them up and disorientate them.

Neon is more refined, better suited to long-range combat and, when used intelligently, allows you to largely disable an enemy threat before going in close to finish off any stragglers. What you're essentially playing with here are lasers that can be shot from your fists, alongside an ability to highlight an enemy's weak point to take them out more efficiently. If you do get in close, Rowe is able to manifest a purple lightsaber-esque sword of light which lacks the crowd control effect of his Smoke chains but is good enough for single enemies.

Without more playing time it's impossible to say which is best, but we'll go out on a limb and say

a mix of both is probably the smartest approach. Whatever the case, testing out the capabilities of both is an enjoyable experience that hints at a significant depth waiting to be unearthed.

Rewind a little, select the Redeem option, and everything is different. The mission you're thrown into is not a mere variation on the bash-the-protestor gig offered by the Corrupt option – this is a whole new ball game.

Having gotten word that an organised gang of drug dealers is using a series of houseboats as storage and distribution centres for their product, Rowe and Fetch take it upon themselves to put them out of business. Seeing as Rowe, inexplicably, cannot swim, and the houseboats are moored along jetties separated by channels of water too wide to safely jump across (without being mowed down by gunfire), sniping with your Neon lasers is the best course of action.

Your goal here is to fight your way past numerous, heavily-armed drug dealers in a bid to identify those houseboats being used as makeshift warehouses. Once all three have been identified (why is it always three?) you need to mark the houses with a graffiti tag so that Fetch, standing watch over you from the safety of a tall building

nearby, can use her own laser ability to burn them down from afar.

With the houseboats reduced to dust, all that remains is to follow a truck containing an already dispatched shipment and put an end to the gang. It's here that Rowe can show off the parkour abilities he's inherited from McGrath, albeit with a twist. With Neon power active you can literally fly up walls in a stream of light, removing the need to seek out and use ledges for climbing. Smoke, on the other hand, gives you the option of transforming into a mist and transporting yourself through handily placed vents to emerge on the opposite side of a structure.

While the Redeem mission is decent entertainment in its own right, the helpful boy scout act doesn't really fit with Rowe's obnoxious and surly personality. The most interesting thing about it is that it's mutually exclusive from the Corrupt mission – whichever one you plump for seemingly removing the other option from your game entirely. To what extent that changes the overall experience and direction of the narrative will be one of things that makes or breaks *Second Son*.

The fact that the good/bad morality options extend beyond simply altering the outlook of your own character is also of great interest. Just how



much does Fetch's life change, for example, due to the choices you make and the path you lead her down? Are you able to alter that course once it has begun? Will her actions change your own view of the game world and of Rowe himself?

Notwithstanding *Grand Theft Auto*, open-world games of this sort are hardly famed for their ability to tell a well-crafted narrative in an engaging and thought-provoking fashion, so thumbs up to Sucker Punch for at least trying.

It's confusing, then, that with such ambition to provide above-average storytelling, Rowe should be chosen as the focal point. In both personality and image, he is the embodiment of focus-tested mediocrity. A character so lacking in intrigue that just looking at him makes those games of Hungry

"GOOD/BAD MORALITY OPTIONS EXTEND BEYOND SIMPLY ALTERING THE OUTLOOK OF YOUR OWN CHARACTER"

Hippos you used to play against your arthritic granny seem attractive by comparison.

At least the sloppy third-person camera, which can lose track of the action during combat, means there are moments when you pretend you're playing as someone else. Just why the camera remains an issue, as it has done for each and every *inFamous* up to this point, is a mystery.

On a more positive note, what the camera does manage to properly frame is legitimately stunning to look at and performs splendidly in terms of advertising the PS4's graphical capabilities. Rain creates a damp sheen on the street that reflects the neon lights of billboards during night time, exaggerating an already heavily stylised visual approach, and there's seemingly no end to the draw distance across the Seattle skyline.

Further, the lack of loading screens (granted, not a new 'feature' nowadays) and the impressive level of civilian traffic and pedestrians is proof of the work Sucker Punch has put into making this environment feel alive and dynamic.

We haven't got long to wait now to find out whether that technical and artistic quality is going to be enough to overcome the clear deficiencies when it comes to Rowe's command of the lead role. As the first major exclusive PS4 release since launch, there's a lot riding on *Second Son*'s success – here's hoping the full game lives up to its well-hyped billing.

John Robertson

INFAMOUS: SECOND SON is being powered by Sucker Punch Productions. Check the website for more details: www.suckerpunch.com

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

I can't afford the console to play it on. Was hoping for a PS3 version :(
@Sy_Rawlings

I adore the originals, no.2 is one of the generations most underrated. Cannot wait for Second Son.
@Ward_17

Hipster Prototype....next game please
Georg Strohmayr

inFamous is a brilliant series cant wait to play second son
Darren Jones

It looks fun. Next question?
Paul Durie



△○×□ How 'bout the power of flight? That do anything for ya? That's levitation, holmes...



△○×□ Slings balls of flame at enemies is just one way to get rid of them – Delsin has loads more tricks.

ETA Q3 2014 | DEV TURTLE ROCK STUDIOS | PUB 2K GAMES | TWITTER @EVOLVEGAME

Evolve

Monster Hunter, but not as we know it



PEOPLE LIKE CO-OP multiplayer, people like competitive multiplayer and people like boss battles. You know what? Let's combine all three

into a single game and give people the chance to experience that three-pronged assault in unison. When defining the core principles of *Evolve*, that's probably something close to how developer Turtle Rock Studios' initial discussions played out.

Forget about regurgitation and repetition – this is not your average shooter. But, given that this is the latest game from the team that brought us *Left 4 Dead*, that should hardly come as a surprise. Turtle Rock has not made a habit of bandwagon hopping.

"We've all played boss battles in games," says Turtle Rock studio head Phil Robb. "They're fun and exciting, but they tend to be heavily scripted affairs. We wanted the excitement of those moments, but more dynamic and re-playable. In the end we came

up with this weird four versus one, cooperative and competitive shooter."

That competitive element comes from playing as the one monster, a giant of a beast known as Goliath. Pure muscle and testosterone, Goliath's strength resides in his sheer brutality and ferociously direct approach to attack. More monsters, with a wider range of strategic options, are to be included in the final game, but for the purposes of this first taste of action only Goliath is playable.

Your goal as the monster is to destroy the four-person Hunter team, simple as that. While you're vastly bigger and stronger than any individual Hunter, the opening moments of a match as the monster are actually spent avoiding conflict and concentrating on how best to level up and further improve your skills.

Dotted around each of *Evolve*'s maps are wildlife of various sizes and forms – some are explicitly aggressive and represent a genuine threat to your

well-being, others are passive and mostly harmless. Killing and eating these animals as Goliath allows him to 'evolve', up to a maximum of evolution stage three. Each level makes him larger, allows him to take more damage and significantly raises his attack strength. On the negative side, he becomes a bigger target for the Hunters and loses a lot of his early speed.

Turtle Rock explained that once you become better at the game it's entirely possible to win matches by sticking to Goliath's weaker, but more nimble, level one form and that some members of the dev team play exclusively in that manner. Given that this was our first time controlling the beast, coupled with the knowledge that four Hunters were likely trailing the footprints Goliath's heavy frame leaves in the dirt, getting to evolution stage three became and remained a priority.

Once fully evolved, and looking very much like something from *Pacific Rim*, Goliath's full range of



PURE MUSCLE AND TESTOSTERONE, GOLIATH'S STRENGTH RESIDES IN HIS SHEER BRUTALITY AND FEROCIOUSLY DIRECT APPROACH TO ATTACK



△×□ Tackling Goliath face-to-face like this is not a good idea, especially when those monkey things also look angry...

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ The imbalance between the two teams lends itself to varied gameplay.

□ Mixed perspectives create the sensation of playing two completely different games.

× The heavily specialised Hunters make teamwork a necessity.

○ Playing solo as the monster is perfect for the focussed individual.

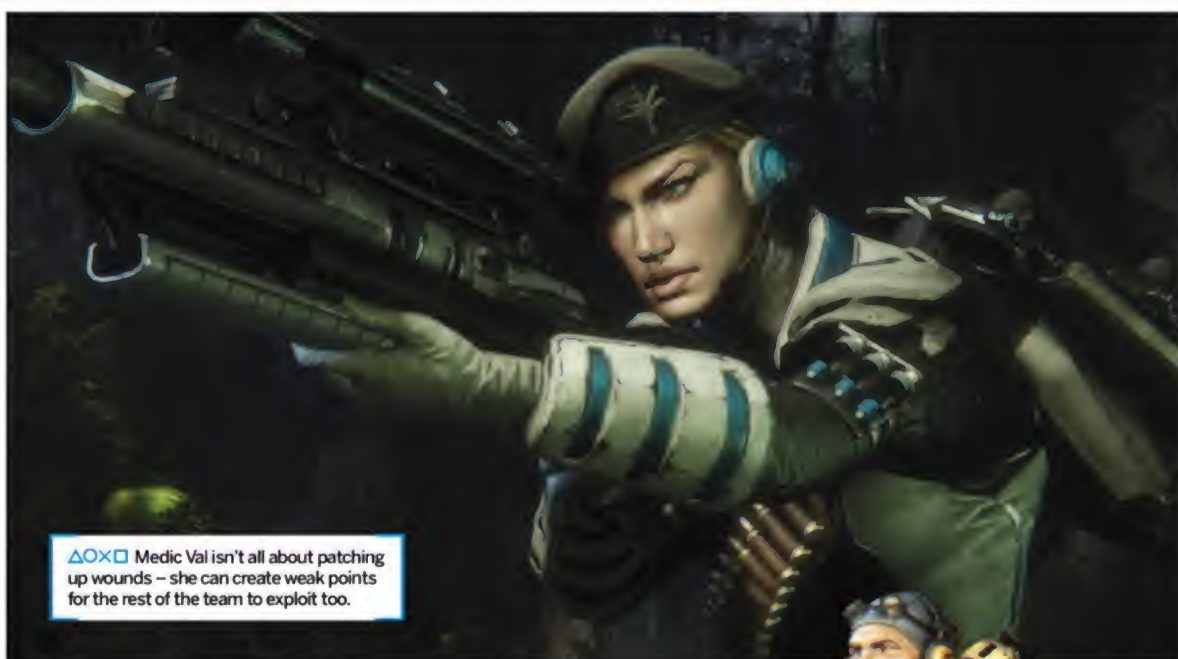
abilities facilitate destructive delight. At short range he can swipe and crush with his clawed fists as well as breathe fire and create a shockwave by slamming into the ground, while at long range he can throw rocks that he's torn from the ground and launch into a headlong charge. Undoubtedly, he's in his element when up-close-and-personal, so it's best to use the ranged attacks as a means to simply give the Hunters something to worry about as you close the distance.

If that all sounds very isolated and narrowly focussed then that's because it is. The monster is very much aimed at players that don't like to chatter and coordinate with other players, an outlook that Turtle Rock is keen to support and encourage in *Evolve*.

"We've certainly got a broad appeal," explains Robb. "I think people that like *Left 4 Dead* and team-based games in general will feel very comfortable playing as the Hunters. That co-op aspect is something we wanted to take beyond what we did with *Left 4 Dead*.

"But we still wanted to include that competitive element, the kind of thing we had learned when we were working on *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*. People that like deathmatch-style games and don't want to be on a team will, I think, gravitate towards the monster more."

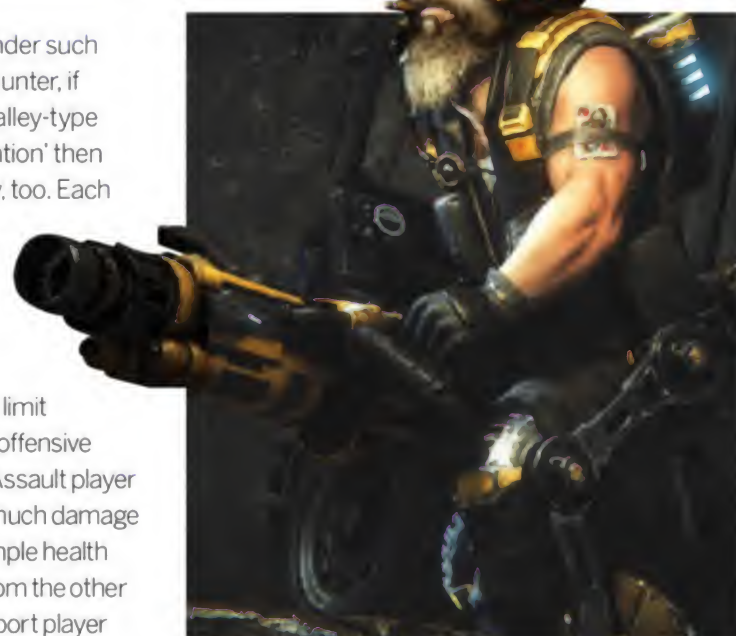
In both focus and feel, playing as a Hunter is completely different. As the monster you're playing from a third-person perspective, creating an exaggerated sense of scale and allowing you to cast an eye over the battlefield. As a Hunter – entirely in first-person – you feel claustrophobic and vulnerable from having to turn and look to constantly make sure you're not being followed. It's amazing just how much that switch from third- to first-person changes the feel of the game.



△×□ Medic Val isn't all about patching up wounds – she can create weak points for the rest of the team to exploit too.

Not that you've got much time to ponder such notions, of course. When playing as a Hunter, if you're not thinking in terms of Silicon Valley-type buzzwords like 'synergy' and 'collaboration' then you're going to die. Probably die quickly, too. Each of the four classes are so specifically balanced that any slip-up, from any team member, can be disastrous. United we stand, divided we fall.

As Trapper, it's your job to track the monster's movement and, when found, limit those movements in a bid to restrict his offensive options. Once trapped, it's time for the Assault player to dive straight into the fire and deal as much damage as possible and take advantage of an ample health bar to divert the monster's attentions from the other Hunters. To aid in that process, the Support player





EACH OF THE FOUR HUNTER CLASSES ARE SO SPECIFICALLY BALANCED THAT ANY SLIP-UP, FROM ANY TEAM MEMBER, CAN BE DISASTROUS

HEY DAVID, HERE'S YOUR SLINGSHOT

To tame the beast, you'll first need to tame these weapons...



Class: Assault

Weapon: Lightning Gun

Taking advantage of this class's ability to absorb damage, the Lightning Gun is effective at chopping off large chunks of the monster's health. If you're too far away from your target the gun will not even fire, which is when you'll want to swap to the assault rifle.



Class: Medic

Weapon: Anti-Material Rifle

This particular weapon is incapable of inflicting damage directly. Instead, successful hits result in the creation of weak points on the monster that other team members can target to deal additional damage. The Medic also has a tranquiliser rifle.



Class: Support

Weapon: Shield Gun

Aim the Shield Gun at an ally and they benefit from a moment of invulnerability. However, if line of sight is broken the gun's effects are removed, forcing the Support to stay mobile and watchful in a bid to keep everyone safe. An invisibility cloak is also at hand.



Class: Trapper

Weapon: Harpoon Gun

Attaching a harpoon slows down the monster and makes it hard for him to attack. Harpooning requires accuracy, and it suffers from long reload times. Your best chance of landing a harpoon is after you've deployed the Mobile Arena, which traps the monster.

has access to a special gun that is aimed at allies and cloaks them in a protective shield. The Medic, most obviously perhaps, is best kept on the outskirts of battle, using her abilities to keep everyone alive.

While there are grey areas (the Support and Trapper classes can also deal damage, for example), by and large each Hunter has a highly focussed goal. Performing actions outside of those limits their effectiveness – everyone throwing themselves guns raised into Goliath's face, for example – is going to result in a bloodbath.

For the Hunters, the X-factor in all of this (buzzword, sorry) is the wildlife. While Goliath is threatened by only a small percentage of it, the Hunters are much more susceptible.

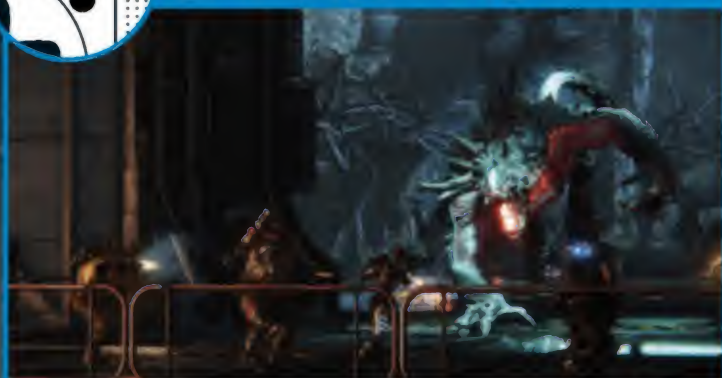
"The environment itself plays a key role," explains producer Matt O'Driscoll. "As the Hunters you have to watch out for carnivorous plants, for example. If you get caught in one you have to call out to your teammates to have them rescue you."

But, it's not all bad: "Other wildlife can help you track the monster," continues O'Driscoll. "If the monster rushes through some low-level shrubs it might set off some 'indicator birds' that fly up into the sky and it shows up on your screen that the monster has been in the area recently."

Engaging with the process of watching for clues as to the monster's whereabouts and then deciding how to act upon that information creates a cat-and-mouse dynamic that is turned on its head thanks to said cat's six-foot fangs and ability to breath fire. Both sides, in a sense, are both predator and prey – they're both



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DANCING TO VICTORY

Dealing death through coordination

Positioning your team around the monster in such a way as to make best use of each Hunter's abilities is no easy feat. Having the Trapper harpoon Goliath to slow him, the Assault unloading lead from short range, the Support providing shield protection and the Medic frantically running around keeping everyone healthy is a coordinated dance that should be savoured and shared whenever you get it right.

△○×□ As a Trapper, Griffin's main job is to track and slow down the monster... hence the whale-grade harpoon gun.

out to kill each other, but in the knowledge that the opposition poses significant danger.

That's the most interesting thing about *Evolve* – the fact that playing as one side or the other doesn't feel like a process of simply going through the motions. The two sides are so different that there always exists the likelihood that your best-laid plans are going to be rendered quickly redundant. This is surely going to become even more of a feature following the game's release, after players have practiced and honed their skills with a specific monster and/or Hunter.

Many PS4 shooters are moving away from the generic drudgery that became the calling-card of the genre's final year or two on PS3, but none seem to be stepping outside of the box quite like *Evolve*. Fitting, really, given the title, that *Evolve* is trying to make that next leap. Oh... we see what they did there!

John Robertson

EVOLVE is being unleashed by Turtle Rock Studios. Check the website for more details: www.evolvegame.com

△○×□ It seems that someone on the design team has been taking inspiration from *Swamp Thing*.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

Brilliant logo to indicate the 4 v 1 gameplay!
@ToneSibley

can't wait as we never got Left 4 Dead on Playstation & this may be a good substitution plus the mechanics sound interesting
@TPSUKsTBD

Looks like a cross between doom, residential evil and alone in the dark. love the idea of a team co op match and utilising each other's skill set to your advantage to further the team through the game. Looking forward to some gameplay!
Wayne Young

Lame
Paul Durie

"ISOLATION ISN'T A FLASHY PIECE OF SCI-FI; THERE ARE NO HOLOGRAMS OR TOUCHSCREENS, NO HEADS-UP DISPLAY"

ETA Q4 2014 | DEV THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY | PUB SEGA | TWITTER @ALIENISOLATION

Alien: Isolation

It may be synthetic, but it's not stupid



THE ALIEN IS crouching on the desk we're hiding behind. In classic movie fashion, we saw this sleek, black killing machine unfurl from its hiding place of pipes and wiring in the ceiling, that iconic, elongated head stretching down into the room above the Seventies computer console we'd been hacking. Amanda Ripley, the hero's daughter who makes the briefest of cameos in the *Aliens* director's cut, drops behind the table and presses up against it. We can hear the monster hissing above us. Its segmented, spiked tail drops over the side and lands next to us. Ripley recoils. And that's when we notice her shoes.

Amanda Ripley is wearing white high-top trainers – the same trainers that the crew of the ill-fated Nostromo transport ship all wear in Ridley Scott's first *Alien* film. It's a tiny detail and the perfect example of the reverence with which the team at The Creative Assembly are treating the source material. *Alien: Isolation* isn't a flashy, modern piece of sci-fi; there are no holograms or touchscreens, no heads-up display. What you get is Scott's 1979 vision of the future: walls of

blinking lights, bulky spacesuits and big CRT computer monitors that chirrup mechanically as they spout lines of indecipherable neon green code.

As you'd expect, not all of this aged tech is as reliable as you might like when being chased around a space station by a pitiless monster. In the demo segment we play, somewhere towards the middle of the game, the power's down (isn't it always?) and we need to find a console to power it back on. Ripley's movements are classic survival horror: you can crouch to move slowly and quietly, walk normally to save time, or peg it full-tilt, clattering around the metal corridors like cutlery in a tumble dryer. There's also a peek function that lets Ripley peer around corners, but unlike, say, *Dishonored*, you're not magically invisible while using it. If you peek round a door frame and come face to face with a dribbling double set of jaws, it's back to the last checkpoint with you.

That's the biggest difference between *Isolation* and its stable of hit-and-miss *Alien* game predecessors: encounters with the alien are 100 per cent lethal. You're not a colonial marine; you don't have nukes, knives or

sharp sticks. What you have is a motion tracker, for a rough guesstimation of where the alien might be, and your trainers, for doomed sprints towards safety when it sniffs you out hiding behind a cupboard.

We only died once in our playthrough, but what a death it was. While searching for an airlock door, the alien dropped in behind us in a corridor, forcing us into hiding as it slowly stalked around sniffing for us. Crouched behind a table, we moved painfully slowly in the opposite direction as it stepped round the sides, hunting for us – slow enough not to make noise, fast enough for it not to see us. The monster was touching distance away. It was horrible and it was brilliant.

Seemingly satisfied with its investigation, the alien stalked back up off the corridor, disappearing into the shadows. For the moment, it seemed we'd caught a reprieve. We scuttled over to the door. But there was a snag: we couldn't find the control panel. There were so many blinking lights and dials that we couldn't find the one to press. We stood up, went from one side of the door to the other, going back and forth in a panic trying to find the right switch. All in the full glow of the airlock

△×□ Giger's iconic alien design is as terrifying today as it was 25 years ago. And now, this one is after you. Gulp.



△×□ There are few scarier sights than this thing lurking round a corner.



△×□ It's very much a retro vision of the future, with CRT monitors et al.

door lights. The alien pinned Amanda to the floor and punched its extendable jaw into her head. No button prompt, no QTE. Game over, man, game over.

If this were a less ambitious game, that whole sequence would have been scripted. But beyond the alien's appearance from the ceiling, our encounter with it was all the more terrifying precisely because it was organic: the alien was really searching for us, reacting to things it saw and heard in the environment. 30 minutes with the game left us on edge. If The Creative Assembly can maintain what we saw for the game's full 12-hour story, we'll be hiding in the ventilation ducts by the time it's over.

Rich Wordsworth

ALIEN: ISOLATION is being developed by The Creative Assembly. Check the website for more details: www.alienisolation.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ A few story beats aside, the alien can appear anywhere at any time.
- The alien can crawl across the ceiling and under the floors. Death from all sides!
- × Ripley can craft items she can use to distract the xenomorph while she slips away to safety.
- However, CA also promises that the alien will learn as well as hunt dynamically.

△×□ Creative Assembly has pulled out all the stops with *Isolation's* visuals. The game looks absolutely amazing on PS4.



ETA TBC

DEV REBELLION

PUB 505 GAMES

TWITTER @SNIPERELITE

Sniper Elite 3

Scoping out Africa



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

RARELY HAVE THERE been better arguments for the strict enforcement of age ratings on games than *Sniper Elite V2*'s killcam. Tracking your bullet in slow motion as it passes through your target, bursting eyeballs, splintering skull and tearing apart brain tissue in graphic detail. It's gory stuff, but the necessity of it is an argument for another. It tells you a lot about Rebellion that, rather than simply marketing *Sniper Elite 3* around MORE GORE and GORIER KILLCAMS, the team is putting its heart and soul into making the game better than its predecessor in every way.

Sniper Elite 3 is set on the African front, often overlooked when compared to the action in Europe, Russia and the Pacific, and this time around you'll be blasting Rommel's Afrika Corps into pieces so the regular infantry has a better chance of surviving the day. By far the biggest change to the game as a whole is the level design. While *Sniper Elite V2* was criticised for being overly linear, *Sniper Elite 3* takes a much larger, sandbox style approach, albeit not entirely open world. You've got a few options in how to tackle objectives, from sneaking in unseen and picking everyone off from afar, or going in guns blazing. The latter approach isn't recommended, as it only takes a couple of hits to down you – this is a game based around sniping rather than machine guns, after all.

Getting a good vantage point and scoping out your plan of attack will be the best way forward. You'll be able to complete objectives at your own discretion, rarely being forced to finish one before another. The example we were shown was a level with six objectives, one of which was to destroy a large 88mm anti-aircraft cannon. The player can destroy it from afar by shooting a carelessly placed ammo dump nearby, kill the guards surrounding it to approach and destroy it directly, or sneak underneath its raised platform and take it out from below.

We get to see the sneaky option, which involves taking out a couple of guards first with headshots

from long range, masking the shots with the metallic clangs from the nearby vehicle depot. Bodies are dragged away and hidden from view before our sniper sneaks under the cannon, places an explosive charge on its underside and retreats to a safe distance. The explosion throws the nearby guards into a state of high alert, triggering them to search the area.

If you are seen, a new 'relocation' mechanic lets you know how much distance you need to put between yourself and your last known location in order for the guards to lose track of you. While strategically placing landmines in potential choke points can deal with the problem before you are

discovered, if you clear the required distance and stay hidden for long enough then the guards will eventually lose the trail and return to their positions. There's clearly a huge emphasis on forward planning, scoping out the areas and figuring out areas of shadow and foliage to hide in, learning enemy patrol patterns and which of them have sniper rifles themselves. Health regeneration is gone, replaced with good old-fashioned health kits, so you can't simply wait a while and try again.

As with most cross-platform games coming in the near future, the PS4 version seems to be the primary focus of the development team. We've been told the PS3 version doesn't look quite as



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ Snipe Nazis to your heart's content.
- Gory-as-all-hell killcams return.
- ✕ New, open-ended sandbox level design.
- Explore the often-overlooked African Front.



△OX□ Let's hope there's less sneaking around and more sniping this time around.



pretty (duh) but the gameplay and level design will be identical across all versions. It says a lot about the approach of Rebellion that the team is also aiming to fix the complaints of linearity and simplicity of the last game while keeping the focus on sniping and, of course, those wonderfully gory killcams. *Sniper Elite 3* may well turn out to be like a real sniper bullet: you won't see it coming, but you'll know damn well when it arrives.

Sam Smith

SNIPER ELITE 3 is being developed by Rebellion. Scope out the website for more details on the war effort: www.sniperelite3.com

△OX□ Even in times of war, there's no excuse for not having perfect hair and a rugged scowl. What a pro.



CHRIS PAYTON

Q&A

We chat to Rebellion's head of art about headshots and moving the action to Africa



You're pushing the killcam feature up a notch again, what's the appeal of that for players?

The original *Sniper*

Elite on PS2 and Xbox had the killcam, but it was not nearly as graphic as it has become. I think 'what is the appeal' is a good question, and I think we were actually surprised by how much attention the killcam got with the release of *Sniper Elite V2*. I don't think there was that much press attention, it was really the YouTubers who went mad for it.

I think it's appealing because it is a standout feature, I can't think of another game that does anything else along those lines to the same extent. The logical follow-on to your question is whether or not the killcam is too graphic. But this is an adult game and I can't believe it will be rated lower than suitable for 16-year-olds. Also, in a two-hour level in *Sniper Elite 3* you might kill 20 or 30 people, whereas in other games you might kill ten times that number in a much more disparaging and off-hand fashion.

You also have X-ray killcams for vehicles. Why?

It's more special to take out a vehicle because of the killcam, and it's more visually interesting. Mainly it's about getting a better understanding of what your bullet is doing and how much impact a single bullet can make, the vehicle killcam – like with

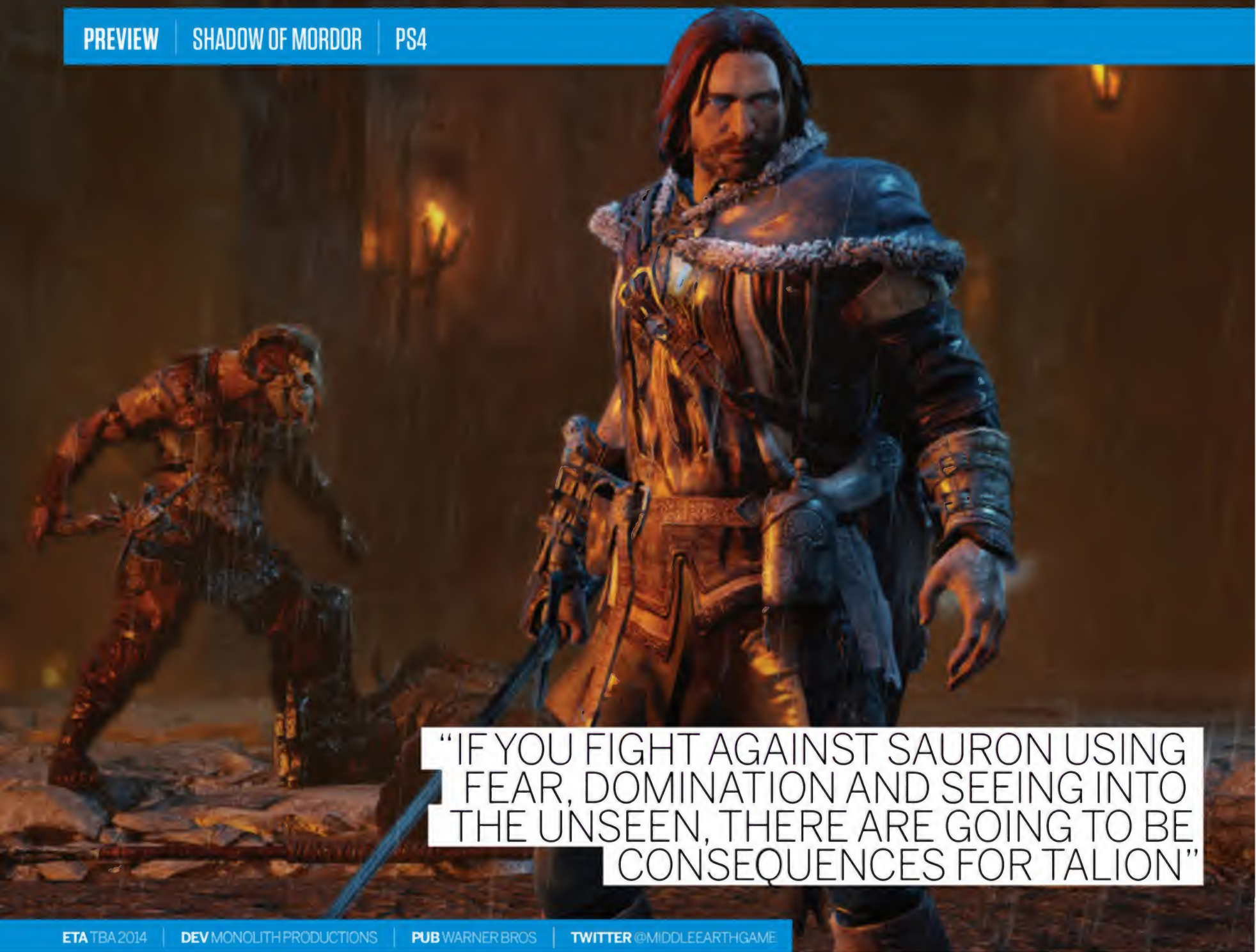
the killcam for the soldiers – gives you that time and focus point to really consider that.

***Sniper Elite 3* is much more open than previous games in the series. Was the decision to set the game in Africa a reaction to that? Or was it the other way around – you wanted to set the game in Africa, so you made it more open?**

There were two major issues of feedback from *Sniper Elite V2*. One was that the AI was a bit clunky. The second was that it was quite linear... that's possibly a bit of an understatement!

The entire AI system has been readdressed and is more believable, which makes the enemy more interesting in *Sniper Elite 3*. Relating to that is that levels have been greatly opened up, in part to allow the AI to do what they are now capable of. If you have a linear level it's very difficult for even very good AI to function because you're usually going to be confronting them on a very front-on basis.

From that perspective we could have set the game anywhere we wanted to and had more open levels, we could have been back in Germany or in Norway or anywhere. I think North Africa was chosen partly because it's often overlooked and most WWII games are set in Northern France or Germany. Plus, it's a very interesting conflict that happened at an interesting time of the war...



"IF YOU FIGHT AGAINST SAURON USING FEAR, DOMINATION AND SEEING INTO THE UNSEEN, THERE ARE GOING TO BE CONSEQUENCES FOR TALION"

ETA TBA 2014 | DEV MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS | PUB WARNER BROS | TWITTER @MIDDLEEARTHGAME

Middle-Earth: Shadow Of Mordor

Walking into Mordor over a pile of dead Orcs



MUCH LIKE MIDDLE-EARTH itself, the history of *Lord Of The Rings* games is a tale of good and evil. While the early 21st Century adaptations of the film trilogy on PS2 were well-received (breaking the ancient curse of the movie tie-in), Tolkien fans of late have had little worth leaving their proverbial Hobbit Holes for. We scored 2011's *War In The North* a measly 42 per cent, and since then we've had to content ourselves with the passable *DOTA* tribute act, *Guardians Of Middle-Earth* – in which the most fearsome enemy to be found was an unreliable server connection. Which, even with Liv Tyler playing the internet, would make for a terrible film.

Raise your ale horns, then, for *Shadow Of Mordor* which is exactly the sort of sword-swinging Tolkien adventure that kids have been bloodily acting out in playgrounds for decades. Forget Hobbits and drippy elves – *Shadow Of Mordor* instead deposits you in Middle-Earth as an honestly-not-Aragorn human Ranger called Talion, who in addition to being a dab-hand with a broadsword also has the twin advantages of being a) dead, and b) resurrected with a suite of Ringwraith-esque powers. Peter Jackson can keep his Elven bread – we'd already take Talion over six hours of watching Frodo and Sam gaze at each other.

Despite releasing alongside the next *Hobbit* film, *Shadow Of Mordor* is set outside the timelines of

both film trilogies, with Talion fighting his own war sometime between Bilbo's return to the Shire and Frodo's leaving it to sigh a lot and not-quite-destroy the One Ring. In fact, getting away from the link to the films was something that developers Monolith made priority one during the game's inception.

"In the past there used to be 'movie games' – they definitely don't exist anymore," says Michael De Plater, director of design. "If you're going to make a game, it's got to be the best game it can be in its own right. The [message] from the publisher was 'make the best game you can – don't do a movie game.'"

Like all characters in the *Lord Of The Rings* universe who come into contact with the dark



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

FACE TO SCARRED FACE WITH THE NEMESIS SYSTEM

Enemies do more than just hold superficial grudges. Each adversary is part of a living hierarchy, with underlings reporting up the chain to Orc chieftains. Letting a foe live to tell tales of your prowess might sow fear in the enemy's ranks, or that enemy might go on to earn promotions and fearsome new skills that they'll happily demonstrate for you at your next run-in. Through this system, your arch enemy in the game could be entirely dynamically generated.



SHARE THIS



HUNTING PARTY

Bringing down an Orc war chief

How you go after *Shadow Of Mordor*'s Big Bads is up to you. If you're feeling tasty, you can just charge in with your sword and your Wraith powers and swing blindly until everything stops twitching. Or, you can get tactical: bend a sentry to your will and have them snipe their allies with a bow, coerce a broken enemy into attacking his master, then sweep in during the chaos and claim your mark's head for your mantelpiece. Don't forget to hit the Share button when you do, mind.





WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's the open-world *Lord Of The Rings* adventure you've always wanted.
- One Ranger, hundreds of Orcs, and a backpack full of murderous magical powers.
- The enemies you face will be different to your friends, as will your methods of killing them.
- Although not designed to be canon, its story will slot neatly into the world.

powers of Sauron, Talion is conflicted and twisted by anger. Where your traditional Tolkien hero is stalwart and true and making huge personal sacrifices for the good of the realm, Talion is a bit of a bastard.

"A criticism I've read, even when people talk about Tolkien himself, is, 'these are just black and white stories of good and evil,'" says De Plater. "But there's so much more to them than that. There are these fascinating characters, like Boromir and Saruman, like Gollum and Denethor – it's more nuanced, a lot deeper than people think. Take someone like Boromir – he wanted to take the Ring and use the enemy's weapon against them. Those were the kind of 'what-if' situations and characters [we considered]."

While the details of Talion's journey are still hidden from the burning eye that floats over **Play's** offices (it's inflatable), we do know that his journey will be one of personal vengeance against Sauron, responsible for the slaughter of his fellow Rangers in a battle at the Black Gate to Mordor (which famously stops anyone from simply walking in). Fortunately, Talion doesn't walk. Talion sneaks, Talion charges, or Talion summons up his horrifying Wraith powers

and sort of teleports like *Dishonored's* Corvo. Any of those will get you into Mordor just fine.

Another use for Talion's spectral powers is scaring the soiled leather singlets off his enemies. We've seen him creep up on an Orc guard and use his Wraith powers to scare him so witless he agrees to become Talion's minion. With an enemy under your command, you can intimidate them into spying on enemy commanders or even attempt a gutsy solo assassination. Whether that's compulsory or part of a moral choice system, however, we don't know. All we know is that, according to De Plater, "if you're going to pursue power and fight against Sauron using his own weapons – fear, domination and seeing into the unseen – there are going to be consequences for [Talion]." Ah, it'll be fine.

Consequences is the watch-word for *Shadow Of Mordor*. While the developer cites the *Arkham* series as an inspiration for the game, the unique selling point for the game is its so-called Nemesis system.

With Nemesis, each enemy you'll encounter on Talion's quest won't just have their own unique personality, but also their own memory. Animosity

won't just be something pre-scripted to move the narrative along, as in, well, every other game – in *Shadow Of Mordor*, Talion is perfectly capable of making enemies without the help of the script writer. If this sounds atypical for a videogame (and we're not asking – it definitely does), it's because its roots are in a different form of gaming altogether.

"This will reveal my geekiness, but it really came from pen and paper RPGs," says De Plater. "When you're playing those games, the characters that you meet on-the-fly and that the dungeon master has to improvise are the most memorable, the ones that you really care about. Because [on-the-fly characters] that escape or kill the guy you're after, [they] just become so much more meaningful."

Once you do catch up to your sworn enemies, the *Arkham* DNA really bubbles to the surface. As you wade towards your target, you'll be surrounded by Orcs, dodging and parrying as you go, beating down enemies and swivelling just in time to deflect a blow from the next. Here, you can once again activate your Wraith powers to rapidly flash between enemies, slow time for a precision bow shot, or just enjoy the look of

COMPANY LINE

"Players will explore the dark and very personal theme of vengeance in a world where decisions have a consequence."
Samantha Ryan, Warner Bros Entertainment



△OX□ We're bloody excited about the Nemesis system. If Monolith manages to pull it off, it'll be a whole new level of AI.

△OX□ Talion's wraith powers look badass. We just hope that you can get your hands on a Morgul-blade.

shock on an enemy's face as his head bounces away from his body. In contrast to the books, *Shadow Of Mordor* is horribly, gleefully violent.

"The films are actually really visceral," says De Plater. "Something we have in common with the films more than with the books is wanting to take Orcs and make them more powerful, meaningful and stronger villains. One of the things that I really loved that was added by Peter Jackson was [Orc captain] Lurtz. His fight with Aragorn is awesome."

'Awesome' is a strong word and one we're loathe to throw around when a game's still in its alpha stage. Monolith has a lot of plates to keep spinning at once – *Assassin's Creed's* movement, *Arkham's* combat, *Skyrim's* exploration and of course, the encyclopaedic expanse of Tolkien lore. That said, if that's a balance that can be struck, it's as sure a recipe for awesome as we've ever encountered.

Rich Wordsworth

MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR is being developed by Monolith Productions. Check the website for more details: www.shadowofmordor.com



△OX□ That spectre looks decidedly *Dark Souls* to us. No treacherous bastards invading your game here though.

ANATOMY OF... MIGHTY NO 9

Keiji Inafune is not about to let Mega Man fade away. Thanks to the power of Kickstarter, Inafune's new studio Comcept has introduced Mighty No 9, a spiritual successor coming in 2015

BECK TO THE FUTURE

Players control Beck, the ninth unit in a series of combat robots called the Mighty Numbers. A computer virus causes his fellow units to go rogue and it's up to Beck to take them down. Sounds pretty familiar, especially to *Mega Man* fans. That's kind of the point, though – this is a new *Mega Man* game in all but name.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Just as Mega Man had his sister Roll, Beck has his own named Call. First Rock and Roll, now Beck and Call... Comcept is promising an online mode where the second player controls Call to take on challenges as a pair. Maybe we'll see counterparts to robot dog Rush, or perhaps the antihero Protoman? That would be sweet.

ROBOTS IN DISGUISE

Mega Man gained the weapons of his vanquished foes, but Beck's powers go even further. Our hero can run, jump and shoot as standard, and yes, he will acquire the weapons of enemies he defeats. On top of that, Beck can transform into a variety of different shapes, based on the Mighty Number robots he defeats.

THE ROBOT FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE BLUE BOMBER

It's not just Inafune on board: the *Mighty No 9* development team boasts a wealth of individuals with experience on past *Mega Man* games, including the composers, the art director and the studio Inti Creates. It's an all-star *Mega Man* dev lineup!

ETA 2015 | DEV COMCEPT | PUB TBA | TWITTER @MIGHTYN09

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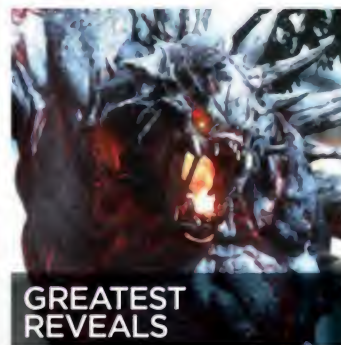
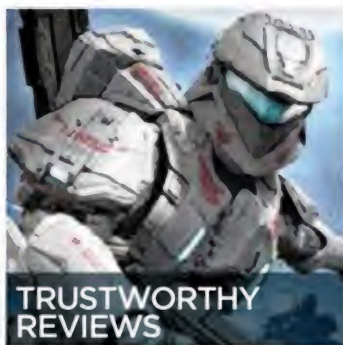
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Get Even

A glimpse of the future



WE MIGHT HAVE NOW entered the next generation of gaming, but it's going to take a while before developers understand the technology enough to create something that looks truly awe-inspiring. At least, so we thought...

The Farm 51 is a small Polish studio known for developing *Painkiller* and *Deadfall Adventures*, not bad games but not of the quality to set anyone's world on fire. That's why it's been such a surprise to see the team come up with one of the most ambitious concepts we've ever seen.

You may well have seen the trailer by now but if not, go watch it. Thanks to new, cutting-edge 3D environment scanning technology, the game features some of the most realistic levels we've ever seen – indeed, in the trailer it's hard to figure out what is real and what is in-game.

The little we've seen of other game assets, like people and weapons, isn't quite as jaw-dropping, but it's still pretty. It's an FPS with a story focussed on the memories of the game's heroes. The routes the player chooses to follow will apparently influence the personality of the characters, in a plot that mixes elements of thriller and horror with exploration.

There also seems to be a bit of *Dark Souls* influence: players on a single-player mission may be joined by other online gamers taking the place



△×□ It appears that there's some sort of weird sci-fi element to *Get Even*. We don't know what it is at this stage but we are certainly intrigued.



"IN THE TRAILER IT'S HARD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS IN-GAME"

of enemies, so you'll never be sure if you're facing human or AI opposition.

Another interesting feature is the inclusion of guns that can fire around corners – a real-world invention that doesn't seem to have made its way to games until now. But take a look at the screen on the gun... something doesn't seem right, does it?

This sense of mystery is the most exciting thing about *Get Even*. We know it isn't just a straight-up shooter. Something strange is happening just below the surface, and being the inquisitive cats we are, we can't wait to find out what.

Sam Smith

GET EVEN is being developed by The Farm 51. Check the website for more details: www.thefarm51.com



ΔOX□ Check out the screen on the gun... what's going on here? It'll be interesting to see how much *Get Even* plays with FPS mechanics.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Genuinely some of the most realistic graphics we've ever seen.



An interesting fusion of solo and multiplayer.



A healthy bit of mystery... what's really going on here?



Guns that can (somehow) shoot around corners.



ΔOX□ While environments are stunning, character models don't quite have the same level of fidelity.

PREVIEW

ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

PS4

FINAL FIGHT

There is no doubt that *Street Fighter IV* is responsible for the resurgence of fighting games seen in the last half-decade, the back-to-basics approach reminding people why they fell in love with the genre. *Ultra Street Fighter IV* is promising to be the definitive edition of a game that has constantly evolved over the last five years. Then again, we have heard that before...

MISS MYSTERY

We don't know who the fifth character is, but Capcom has dropped a few hints. The character is a female who has never been in a *Street Fighter* game before, but exists in the universe and has featured in other media. This has led fans to the comics and a few potential prospects: Gouken's daughter, Sakura's friend or one of M Bison's dolls...

METHODS OF DISTRIBUTION

Owners of *Super Street Fighter IV* or the more recent *Arcade Edition* will have the option of a digital update for a reduced price, saving them buying a whole new game. Alternatively, a complete version will be available both digitally and physically.

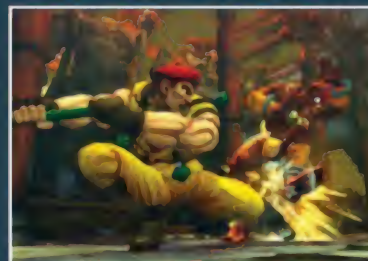
A NEW CHALLENGER HAS APPEARED!

The most noticeable additions to *Ultra SFIV* are the five new characters, one of which is yet to be revealed. The other four are Rolento, Elena, Hugo and Poison, who you may remember as starring in *Street Fighter X Tekken* a few years back.

ULTRA MECHANICS

New characters aside, there are also three new mechanics. First up is the Red Focus Attack, eating up two bars of meter but absorbing what appears to be an endless number of attacks. Next is delayed wake-up, allowing downed characters to stay on the floor a small while longer. Finally, Double Ultra allows a character to have both Ultra combos available at once.

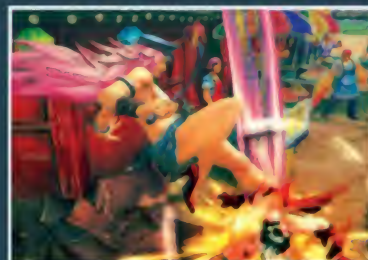
HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?



The amount of new versions released over the last five years takes us into murky waters: hardcore fighting game fans tend to be happy for any new edition, with the new characters and balance changes it brings, while more casual players may resent having to pick up another version of a game they essentially already own.



Ultra Street Fighter IV will be the fourth version of the game originally released in 2009. The first update, *Super Street Fighter IV*, required a full retail purchase, but the following *Arcade Edition* was available as a complete edition and a downloadable upgrade (for a fee) for owners of *SSFIV*.



Fighting games are a competitive experience, and with players constantly learning new tricks, sometimes balance changes are necessary. Otherwise, games can progress to a state where only a select few characters are at all viable in high-level play.



Balance changes alone may not warrant a purchase, but each new iteration of *Street Fighter IV* has added characters and stages, and *Ultra* is going so far as to add new mechanics to the core gameplay. Most importantly, they keep the scene for a game alive, bringing lapsed players back into the fold while providing something new for the old hands to sink their teeth into.

Answer: Too much is too much, silly.

Instant Expert

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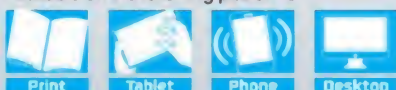


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PREVIEW ROUND-UP VITA SPECIAL EDITION



It's not all PS4 in our future – the Vita is going from strength to strength, a console worthy of everyone's time and attention. 2014 is shaping up to be another great year for Sony's handheld...



MURASAKI BABY

YOU MIGHT REMEMBER this one, shown off by Sony at various conferences throughout the last year. A Vita exclusive puzzle-platformer, *Murasaki Baby* is making some of the most inventive uses of the handheld we've seen, from rotating the console to do the same to the world inside the game to changing the background with a swipe of the finger. Add in some demented horror imagery inspired by the works of Edward Gorey and you've got one of the quirkiest games on any console.

RELEASE DATE: 2014



DEMON GAZE

BEING THE HARDCORE bastards we are on **Play** we love a good dungeon crawler, and *Demon Gaze* looks like it could scratch that particular masochistic itch. Hero Oz is a mysterious young man with a magic eye that grants him the ability to seal demons. He can also create secondary characters to join him on his quest, choosing from seven classes and five races. Gameplay sounds inspired by *Shin Megami Tensei*, with defeated demons available to be summoned in battle. It's coming to Europe in April, another great example of obscure Japanese games making the trip West. We wholeheartedly approve.

RELEASE DATE: 25 APRIL



DISGAEA 4: RETURN

STRATEGY-RPGS ARE great. They've got everything you need: health bars, damage numbers, an isometric field of little squares and thousands of hours of content. No series embodies this more than *Disgaea* – a character's maximum level is 9,999, for goodness' sake. Each main game in the series has received a portable port, and this time it's *Disgaea 4*'s turn. If you've played any of them, you'll know what to expect: more great dialogue, deep combat systems and more days gone that you will never, ever get back.

RELEASE DATE: TBA



BORDERLANDS 2

ONE OF OUR favourite games of 2012 is finally almost on the Vita as we prepare to kiss goodbye to another 500 or so hours. Seriously, if you haven't played it yet, get ready to become seriously addicted – *Borderlands 2* is absurdly good. One of the most expansive, amusing and beautiful RPGs we've played in a long time, the concept of being able to play even more *Borderlands* on the bus (or the toilet, if you'd rather) is one that gets our heart rates rising with anticipation.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014



HATSUNE MIKU: PROJECT DIVA F 2ND

DEPENDING ON HOW au fait you are with Japanese nerd culture, you may have already heard of Hatsune Miku. The 'virtual idol' is an entirely artificial creation, voiced by synthesised software and performing 'real life' concerts on a giant screen while a ton of people who should have better music taste dance around and wave glow sticks. Still, her games are worth a crack if you've got a taste for old-fashioned rhythm-action. Which we do.

RELEASE DATE: TBA



HOTLINE MIAMI 2

TO BE HONEST we didn't expect *Hotline Miami* to work at all with a controller. A game based on pixel-perfect aiming, ninja-like reactions and (seemingly) reliant on mouse control just didn't seem possible on a less-precise console pad. But we can admit when we are wrong, and in this case we were happy to be. *Hotline Miami* on PS3 and Vita was bloody great; just as much gory, neon-soaked fun as it was on PC. The sequel seems like more of the same, and that's just fine with us.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2014



CONCEPTION 2

A TURN-BASED RPG that has been compared to *Persona* (a very good thing), *Conception 2* revolves around the concept of wooing magical girls to produce 'Star Children' that you then raise and use in battle. Despite the dodgy-sounding premise, this isn't a porn game, but a proper RPG that's already been well received in Japan. It's coming to America in April, and we imagine a European release would follow quickly, but even if it doesn't, importing isn't all that taxing on Vita.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014



FINAL FANTASY X/X-2 HD

FINAL FANTASY X is one of our favourite games in the series, a wonderful adventure through a beautiful world with memorable characters and a bloody good battle system. The chance to play it all over again in HD is very exciting, and being able to play it on our handhelds on those long train rides is a dream come true. Blitzball on the go! Hooray! Of course, it comes with the awful X-2 as well, but feel free to ignore that. *Final Fantasy X* in HD is worth the price tag on its own – any other game, rubbish or not, is a bonus.

RELEASE DATE: 21 MARCH



FREEDOM WARS

MONSTER HUNTER IS a big deal in Japan, so it's not surprising that a number of similar games have appeared in the last few years, on handhelds in particular. To dismiss all such games as derivative is unfair, though, as several are taking the core concept of teaming up with friends and taking down huge bosses and finding exciting ways in which to mix things up and add originality.

The setting of *Freedom Wars* is fascinating: taking place in the year 102013, the surface of Earth lies

RELEASE DATE: 2014

in ruins and is incapable of sustaining life. As such, humanity is forced to live below the surface, and overpopulation has become a critical problem. To compensate, a drastic measure has been enforced, sentencing anyone arrested for any crime as guilty, regardless of whether or not they actually are. Prisoners are sent to live in enormous prison complexes and forced to battle huge monsters as punishment, but every monster killed scores a reduction to the prisoner's sentence.



LA MULANA

SPELUNKY FANS: THIS is your next port of call. *La Mulana* has actually been around since 2005, acting as an inspiration to *Spelunky*. A remade version hit PCs in 2012 and this version is now coming to Vita. Once again you are an intrepid archaeologist journeying through ancient ruins, but rather than a random roguelike, *La Mulana* has a lot more in common with games like *Metroid* and *Castlevania*: a huge open map, available to explore at your leisure. It's hard as nails but bloody good fun.

RELEASE DATE: TBA

PURE PLATINUM

Trophy rarity investigated



ONE OF THE COOLEST FEATURES of the PS4 is the ability to see the rarity of each Trophy – the percentage of players that have earned any particular accolade. For example, if a Trophy has a 47 per cent attainment rate, that means that only 47 per cent of everyone who has ever played that game has earned that Trophy.

The new feature is either a blessing or a curse, depending on how you view Trophies. Most gamers will probably be interested to see some of the stats, but leave it at that. However, for the perfectionists out there – the gamers that simply will not rest until they know that they are the best of the best – these new numbers present a new challenge. No longer is getting every Trophy in each game you play enough: you need to seek out the rarest of the rare to prove your superiority.

If this sounds like you, we sympathise – we're right there with you, which is why you might be interested to find out just which Trophies are the rarest of the lot, and which of them are surprisingly common. You'll be surprised just how few people have gone that extra mile to get the Platins on some of the biggest games on the market, and also just how little effort some others seem to have made...



0.1%

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

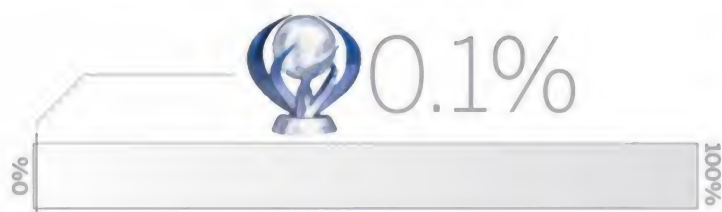
It might surprise you to learn that only 0.1 per cent of players have snagged the elusive Platinum for *Grand Theft Auto IV*. Sure, it's a big game, but it's been out for several years now, giving players ample time to earn the Platinum.

The two biggest stumbling blocks are achieving 100 per cent completion in the single-player and reaching the maximum rank in multiplayer. Both tasks are extremely time-consuming, and doing everything in the main game will either require a guide or a hell of a lot of trial and error. File this one under 'grind'.

There are a few extra factors to consider, especially when it comes to games as popular as *Grand Theft Auto*. The number of people who played *GTA IV* is astronomical, far more than an average game, and a large number of those people would probably not describe themselves as 'gamers'. Obscure games may have higher attainment percentages as they are only going to be played by hardcore fans in the first place, and the opposite is true for *GTA*. A huge amount of casual players not concerned Trophies will drive down the percentages by a large margin.



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

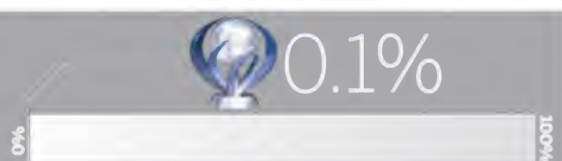
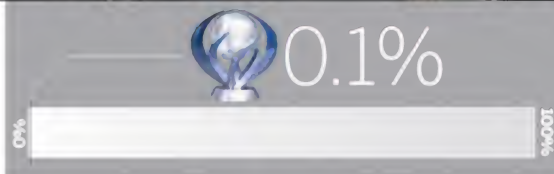


We love *XCOM*, but we haven't earned the Platinum and we probably never will. This one is so rare thanks to one Trophy in particular – 'No Looking Back'. This tasks the player with beating the game in Ironman mode, meaning your save is constantly, automatically updated after every decision – you can't go back and change things. Even worse, you have to do it on Classic or Impossible difficulty. This isn't a case of simply persevering: if you mess up, and you will, it's entirely possible to fail the game and have to start again. Good luck getting this one, as one wrong move could ruin hours of progress.



INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

One of the hardest Platinum Trophies out there. If you are part of the 0.1 per cent that have truly completed *Injustice*, we salute you. Two Trophies in particular throw up enormous roadblocks, neither of which we will ever get. The first of these impossible bastards is 'Ultimate Battler', tasking you with finishing all 20 types of Battle Mode. These start off pretty simple but become stupidly hard, to the point where the last one is titled 'Impossible!'. Attempt to defeat the entire cast of *Injustice* with a single health meter? Nope. Not even going to try. Three stars on every STAR Labs mission is never happening, either – some are borderline broken.



Guess what – everything we said about *GTA IV* applies to the newest entry in the series as well. Once again, you'll need to 100 per cent the main game and reach rank 100 in *GTA Online*, both of which will take a hell of a long time.

One aspect contributing to the low attainment rate of the Platinum is the fact that the game is still relatively new. Will we see the percentage rise over time, or will it hover at 0.1 like its predecessor? Odds are it will probably stay stagnant. This is a bloody hard one to get, and as before the huge number of people playing will drive down that figure.



Not the hardest Platinum in terms of player skill, *NBA 2K14* is still essentially impossible (at the moment) due to the huge amount of luck involved. A few Trophies are tied into the MyTEAM mode, a virtual collectable card game where players can buy new packs of cards with either earned virtual points or real-world cash. The hard ones here are 'Collect 'Em All', a measly Bronze for getting every sodding card in the game, and 'There's More?' – a Gold for finding every card in the Historic Collection. Prepare to waste a lot of time (or money, or both) buying digital basketball cards if you want this Platinum.



SURPRISINGLY COMMON

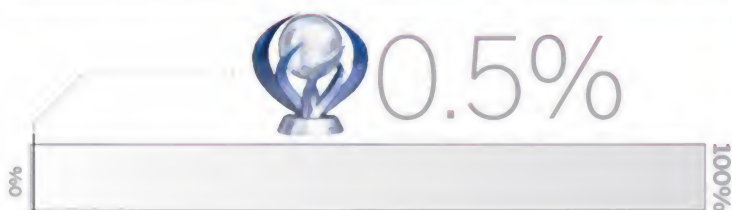
Some of the Platitudes you may have thought incredibly rare are actually not at all. For example...



DARK SOULS

Yep, 6.2 per cent of people who have played *Dark Souls* on PS3 have earned the Platinum Trophy, an incredibly high figure considering the evil reputation of punishing difficulty the game carries. Sure, some of this can be put down to the fact that the majority of people playing *Dark Souls* in the first place will be hardcore gamers, but getting the Platinum just isn't that tough. You only need to play through *Dark Souls* two and a half times to get it, as long as you know exactly what to do along the way. That shouldn't take you longer than 60 hours, so long as you know what you are doing.

Indeed, hardcore *Dark Souls* players have started coming up with their own challenges once the Platinum is attained. Fancy yourself a real gamer? Try doing a 'onebro' run: that's the whole game at Level 1, with no levelling-up allowed. Now we're talking. Did we mention we really like *Dark Souls*?



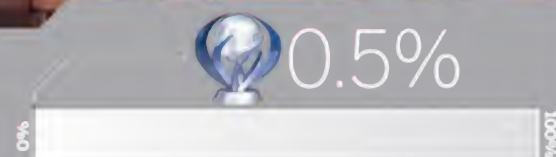
Sure, 0.5 per cent isn't a high statistic, but when you consider how sodding hard getting that Platinum in *Revengeance* was, it's impressive all the same. Finishing the game on the almost impossible Revengeance difficulty and earning a top rank on every single VR mission are two tasks we will never accomplish, so the fact that 0.5 per cent of you have is honestly impressive.

METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE



CATHERINE

Same deal with *Catherine*. 0.5 per cent is still an impressively large statistic if you've ever tried to go for the Platinum yourself. Besting the randomly generated Tower Of Babel mode is a huge feat, as there is no opportunity to learn what is coming - you simply have to be that damn good. Love is dead! Yet, 0.5 per cent of players have



managed to defeat that challenge and earn the Platinum Trophy. Again, you can argue that only hardcore types will be playing *Catherine* in the first place, but it's still a surprisingly high stat.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER HD

The Platinum for *Peace Walker HD* requires a lot of grinding, preferably with a friend, as well as S ranks on every main and side mission. It's going to take a good 100 hours (at least), so hats off to the 1.8 per cent of players who have actually achieved the milestone. This is one we've been working towards for months already.

1.8%



YOU SHOULD ALL BE ASHAMED

Some of the things we are discovering due to these stats aren't quite as positive. Some Trophies should be far more common than they are – it's enough to make us lose faith in humanity...



37.7%



DON'T STARVE

UNLOCK WILLOW – Willow is the first character you'll unlock in *Don't Starve*, normally after about an hour of gameplay. Yet only 37.7 per cent of players have done so. We appreciate the game was free, but even so, this is embarrassing. You lot couldn't even have played it for an hour? Poor show.



SPELUNKY

COMPLETE THE GAME – Only 6.2 per cent of *Spelunky* players have actually finished the game. Note that this isn't the Trophy for getting through it all in one life, but the one for simply reaching the end of the game. Shameful.

6.2%

GET PAST THE START SCREEN – So, *Persona 4 Arena* has a Trophy for pressing Start on the title screen and entering the main menu – simple stuff. Yet, somehow, 1.9 per cent of people who have played the game have apparently never gotten past the start screen. Seriously? Why would you buy the game and never get past the title screen? Ugh. We need a cold shower.



PERSONA 4 ARENA

98.1%

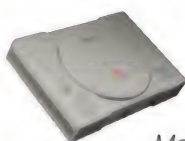


TOP TEN PLAYSTATION PLATFORMERS

THEY MIGHT NOT BE QUITE AS BIG A DEAL AS THEY USED TO BE, BUT WE STILL HAVE A SOFT SPOT FOR PLATFORM GAMES. THEY REPRESENT GAMING AT ITS PUREST FORM: AN OBSTACLE COURSE THROUGH WHICH YOU MUST MANOEUVRE YOURSELF. THE GENRE AS WE KNOW IT WOULDN'T EXIST WITHOUT A CERTAIN ITALIAN PLUMBER, BUT THE PLAYSTATION HAS ALSO SEEN A GREAT NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL, TIMELESS PLATFORMERS. SUCH AS THESE...



CRASH BANDICOOT



Mario 64 and *Crash Bandicoot* represent two different ways of solving the 3D problem. While *Mario* blazed a trail with open levels and a controllable camera, *Crash* took basic 2D level design, gave it a third dimension and polished it until it shined. The result was a must-have for the PSone, giving Sony a mascot to compete with Mario and Sonic. *Crash* was huge, and two outstanding sequels and a kart racing spin-off from Naughty Dog cemented the anthropomorphic marsupial as a huge part of the PSone's success.



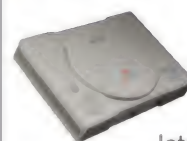
JAK AND DAXTER



Just as *Crash* defined platforming on PlayStation early in the console's lifespan, so too did *Jak And Daxter* on PS2. Players once again control a silent protagonist, although this time they are accompanied by the loud-mouthed Daxter, Jak's best friend who is transformed into an 'ottsel' at the beginning of the game. *Jak And Daxter* marked Naughty Dog's first foray into true 3D platforming, and to great success. Two sequels and a kart racer would follow but the original game still holds up best.



ABE'S ODDYSEE



Another hugely influential game for an entire generation, gamers purchasing a PSone toward the latter half of 1997 would become immediately familiar with *Abe's Oddysee* thanks to the trial version included on the famous Demo One disc. Abe is tasked with rescuing as many of his fellow Mudokons as possible from slavery in a darkly comic adventure. While Abe can't do much fighting himself, the player can possess enemies to do the dirty work for him, leading to some real head-scratching puzzles.



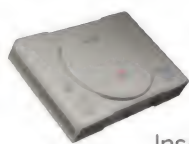
RATCHET AND CLANK



So Naughty Dog moved on to a new franchise with the new generation, and so too did Insomniac. *Ratchet And Clank* ticked all the boxes for the time but stood out for its humour and broad range of over-the-top, crazy gadgets and guns. Subsequent titles further emphasised the weapons, leaning more towards third-person shooter than platformer on a few occasions. There are about 20 *Ratchet And Clank* games these days, some better than others, but again the first holds up as one of the best.

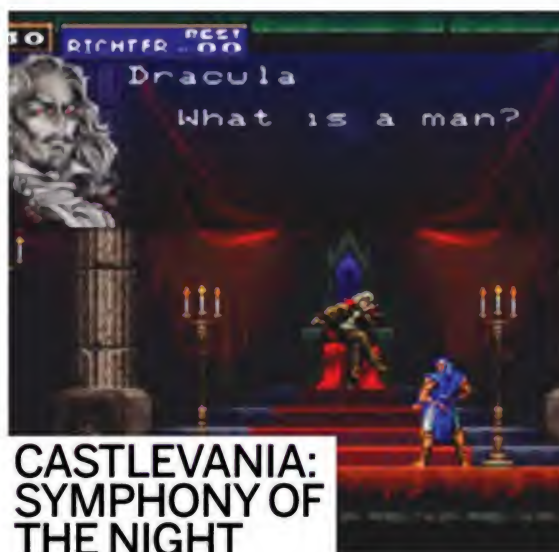


SPYRO THE DRAGON

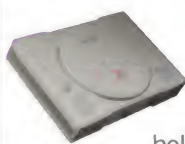


Naughty Dog may have been the platforming king of PSone, but the competition was never far behind.

Insomniac's *Spyro The Dragon* was also extremely popular, launching a franchise as well as two excellent PSone sequels. Where *Crash* was still essentially a 2D game at design level, *Spyro* featured the wide-open stages that *Mario 64* had pioneered several years earlier. The resulting feud between *Crash* and *Spyro* was actually more of a friendly rivalry – a hidden demo of the first *Spyro* even appeared in *Crash 3*.



CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT



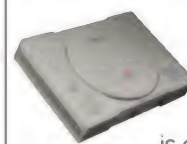
We verge away from pure platforming briefly to a game of the Metroidvania sub-genre...

hell, the game that invented the term.

Symphony Of The Night is not only the best game on this list but one of the best games of all time and an utter necessity if you consider yourself a gamer. Taking the platforming of earlier *Castlevania* games and mixing it with a *Metroid*-style open 2D map and RPG elements like stat building and equipment, *SOTN* influenced not only the direction of the *Castlevania* series but countless others.



KLONOA



The PSone was awash with platformers and, as such, some have since been forgotten. *Klonoa*

is one such game, a 2.5D gem from

Namco starring the titular human/cat/dog/whatever as he journeys through some beautiful landscapes to save his friends. *Klonoa* is notable for feeling retro in an era where developers were obsessed with embracing 3D and finding the next big bre akthrough in platform game mechanics. Sometimes you just want to kick back, listen to some lovely music and play a great side-scroller.



PSYCHONAUTS



One of the most acclaimed games that nobody bought or played, *Psychonauts* has since become a cult classic. The

brainchild of Tim Schafer, *Psychonauts* takes the premise of delving into people's minds and uses it to create some amazing level designs that still feel totally original to this day. It's also got a great script and story, especially for a genre that tends to neglect such things. Dig up an old PS2 copy or play it on PC for mere pennies, and enjoy one of the best 3D platformers ever made.

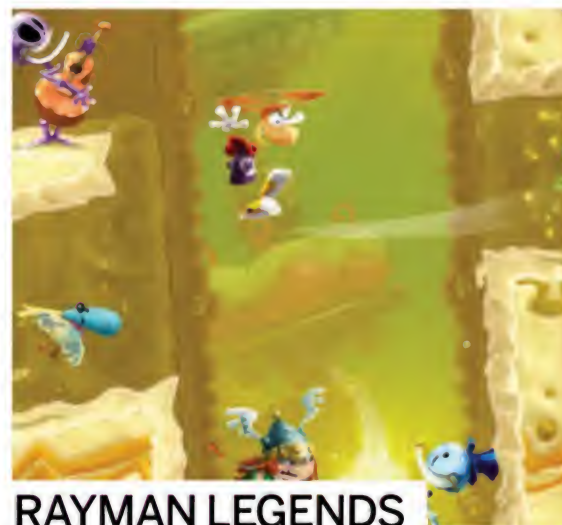


SPELUNKY



One of the best games on PS3 and Vita, *Spelunky* mixes platforming with randomised, roguelike

dungeon crawling to great success. The random element means you never know what's coming, although as you grow more familiar with the game you will see yourself getting further and further as your skill increases. Even when you think you've finished, there's a ton of secret stuff to discover, and making your way to the final, hidden world is a task that only the most hardcore will accomplish.



RAYMAN LEGENDS



The most recent entry on our list is one of the most beautiful games we've ever played. Ubisoft has

done a superb job of bringing forward the best parts of the *Rayman* games and combining them with new ideas and outstanding graphics. Few games are as good at putting a smile on your face, but for those who crave challenge the difficulty ramps up towards the end. Truly a game that can be enjoyed by everyone and one of the most refreshing platform games in recent memory.

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A stack of PlayStation magazine covers is shown against a blue background. The top cover is for issue number 239, featuring 'Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2' and 'Dark Souls II'. The cover art depicts a character in a red cape and a dragon. Text on the cover includes 'METAL SLUG & THE SOUL', 'DRACULA'S REBIRTH PLAYED TO UNDEATH', 'DARK SOULS II', 'LORDS OF SHADOW 2', 'DESTINY IS THE GAME WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE', 'PLAYSTATION WINS 2014', 'LATEST PREVIEWS: KINGDOM UNDER FIRE II, YAIBA, NINJA GAIDEN, NO MANS SKY, WOLFENSTEIN, THE WITCHER 3, WILD HUNT, TRANSISTOR, THE CREW & MORE', and a list of other games like 'GTA V', 'Grand Theft Auto V', 'The Last of Us', 'The Umbrella Corps', 'The Division', 'The Division 2', 'The Division 3', 'The Division 4', 'The Division 5', 'The Division 6', 'The Division 7', 'The Division 8', 'The Division 9', 'The Division 10', 'The Division 11', 'The Division 12', 'The Division 13', 'The Division 14', 'The Division 15', 'The Division 16', 'The Division 17', 'The Division 18', 'The Division 19', 'The Division 20', 'The Division 21', 'The Division 22', 'The Division 23', 'The Division 24', 'The Division 25', 'The Division 26', 'The Division 27', 'The Division 28', 'The Division 29', 'The Division 30', 'The Division 31', 'The Division 32', 'The Division 33', 'The Division 34', 'The Division 35', 'The Division 36', 'The Division 37', 'The Division 38', 'The Division 39', 'The Division 40', 'The Division 41', 'The Division 42', 'The Division 43', 'The Division 44', 'The Division 45', 'The Division 46', 'The Division 47', 'The Division 48', 'The Division 49', 'The Division 50', 'The Division 51', 'The Division 52', 'The Division 53', 'The Division 54', 'The Division 55', 'The Division 56', 'The Division 57', 'The Division 58', 'The Division 59', 'The Division 60', 'The Division 61', 'The Division 62', 'The Division 63', 'The Division 64', 'The Division 65', 'The Division 66', 'The Division 67', 'The Division 68', 'The Division 69', 'The Division 70', 'The Division 71', 'The Division 72', 'The Division 73', 'The Division 74', 'The Division 75', 'The Division 76', 'The Division 77', 'The Division 78', 'The Division 79', 'The Division 80', 'The Division 81', 'The Division 82', 'The Division 83', 'The Division 84', 'The Division 85', 'The Division 86', 'The Division 87', 'The Division 88', 'The Division 89', 'The Division 90', 'The Division 91', 'The Division 92', 'The Division 93', 'The Division 94', 'The Division 95', 'The Division 96', 'The Division 97', 'The Division 98', 'The Division 99', 'The Division 100'. The bottom cover visible is for 'Tomb Raider' and 'The Division'.



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"DESPITE THE GAME'S TITLE, NICKING STUFF ISN'T REALLY THE MAIN EMPHASIS HERE"

Thief

The Devil makes work for idle hands



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Square Enix

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Eidos Montreal

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1

AGE RATING
18+

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Trophies 38



WE HAVE NEVER stolen so much. We stole ornate hairbrushes, statues and paintings. We stole all manner of trinkets and heirlooms and whatnots. We cruelly bludgeoned a frail, unknowing old lady over the back of the head with a club, all for a fountain pen that was in the drawer next to her. It probably wasn't even an expensive pen. It was a silvery colour, sure, but they sell pens that look like they're made of silver in WHSmith and we've never *needlessly* assaulted another person in order to obtain one. Such is the *Thief* player's modus operandi – if it's there, you'll take it, no matter what it is or who you have to wallop in order to snag it.

Despite the game's title, though, nicking stuff isn't really the main emphasis here. For the uninitiated, *Thief* is a reboot of a franchise that began on PC in 1998 with *Thief: The Dark Project*, a game penned by *BioShock* head honcho and 2013's official Man Of The Hour Ken Levine. Eidos and Square Enix have swiped the franchise and given it a good old working-over, while still retaining the pure stealth experience that the series has purveyed for the last 16 years.

And now we find *Thief* nicely at home on PS4, squeezed through the mangle to create a product that is enjoyable,

challenging, well designed and imaginative. It's also a bit muddled, and seems to wander off down a strange path as time wears on, leading to a final third that is less than satisfying.

You are Garrett, a master thief. Despite his ignominious job title, Garrett is a lovely chap. Armed with a bow and a blackjack – which is essentially a club-thing for cracking people around the back of the head with – Garrett also possesses a wide spectrum of ideals. This is a man who claims to be a *master thief*. His kleptomania truly knows no bounds, and yet he very much fills the shoes of the hero. He does the 'right thing' and, honestly, never shows himself to be the utter bastard that you'd hope he would be. We won't reveal too much here, but the story revolves around Garrett attempting to uncover some weird goings-on surrounding Baron Northcrest, a strange Masonic figure who rules The City.

The game opens with Garrett and his compatriot Erin as they stalk across the slate rooftops of The City, the game's primary setting. The City is a steampunk-style principality, largely modelled on a Victorian-era European town. There are winding cobbled streets dimly lit by flickering lanterns, lined with creaking wooden houses and malnourished beggars. It rains a



he hops through someone's window to pinch a necklace, Erin challenges Garrett to a race through the streets. Through holding down L2, Garrett can engage in an *Assassin's Creed*-style free-run to scale certain obstacles. He's a little more restricted than Ezio or Kenway in terms of movement, and yet the design of The City coupled with this mechanic creates an atmosphere of free roaming as you stalk across the rooftops before leaping down next to an unsuspecting sentry.

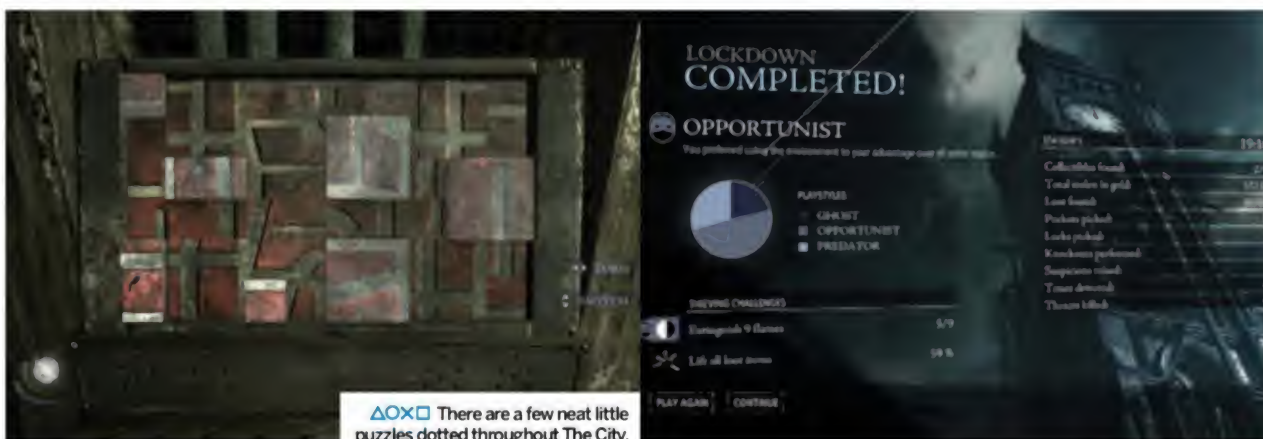
And here's where the first missed opportunity rears its ugly head. It seems a real shame that in a game where you are encouraged to explore and to use the environment to your advantage, you are tethered to a hub-based world. It's not for us to say that every modern game needs an open-world component, but *Thief* just feels lacking without one. The world itself is decent enough – if a little monochrome at times – but if Eidos was to kill the hub structure and open everything up then *Thief* would have

benefited tremendously.

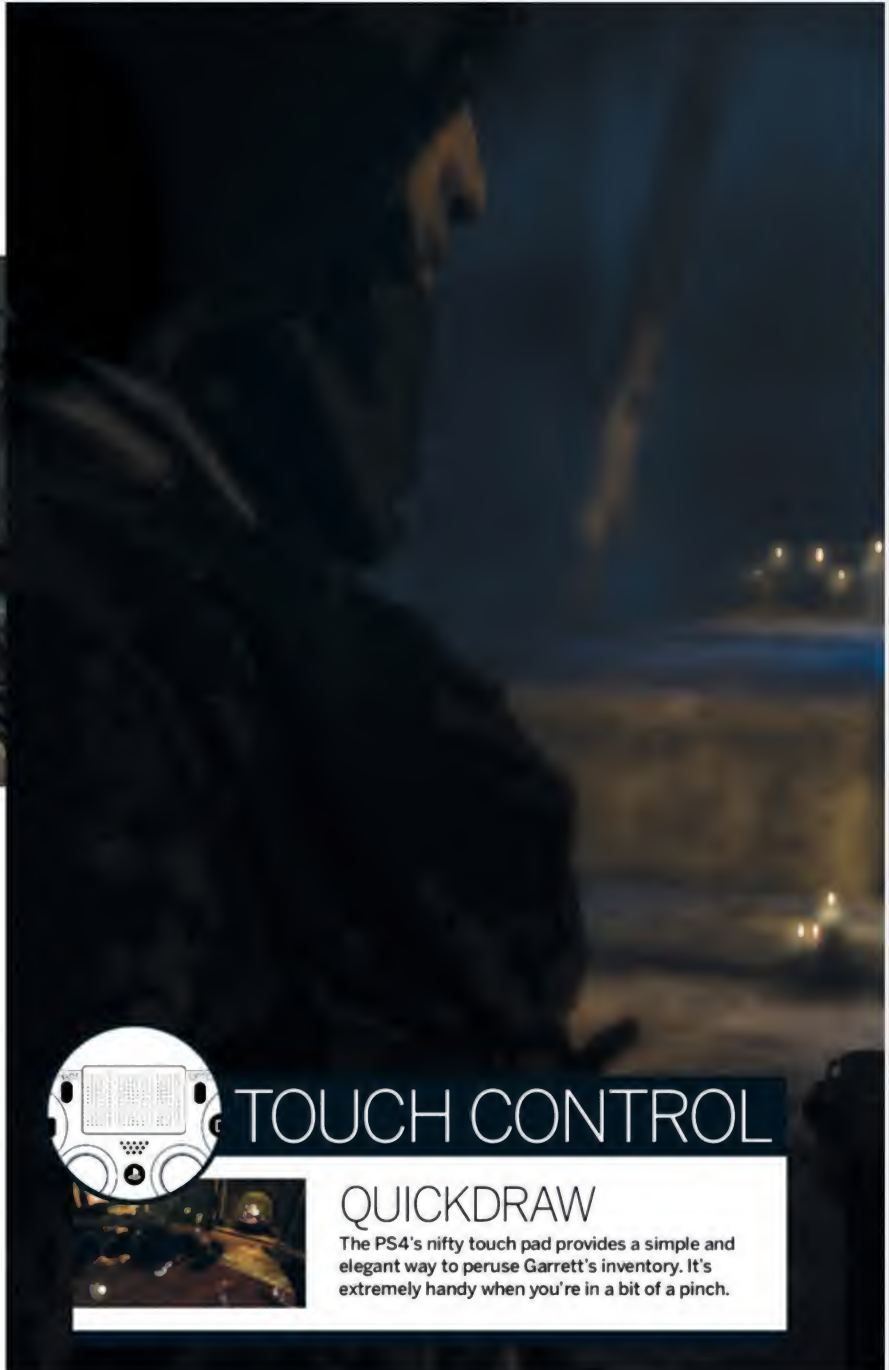
When you're on ground level, the stealth aspect of *Thief* really comes into play. Remaining out of sight of the Baron's henchmen is totally reliant on shadows, and Eidos Montreal has exploited light and shadow extremely well. A small orb in the bottom-left of the screen indicates whether or not you are easily visible, and is well worth keeping a close eye on.

The stealth mechanics here are brilliant. Sure, there are occasions when just because you are in shadow a guard can be stood within kissing distance of you and not notice you lurking there, but for the most part it is a believable and intuitive system. *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* also peddled a great stealth system (despite not being an out-and-out stealth game), and *Thief* continues to improve upon Eidos's formula. At a time when the stealth genre's big-hitters like *Splinter Cell* are peddling awkward action mechanics, Eidos Montreal has created a game that – the vast majority of the time, at least – nails its primary objective.

"THIS IS A GAME THAT IS CRYING OUT FOR A DARK, GRITTY TAKE ON STORYTELLING"



ΔOX There are a few neat little puzzles dotted throughout The City.



TOUCH CONTROL

QUICKDRAW

The PS4's nifty touch pad provides a simple and elegant way to peruse Garrett's inventory. It's extremely handy when you're in a bit of a pinch.

ΔOX This is the Queen of Beggars. Unfortunately we couldn't rob any of her stuff.

However, the problems with *Thief* become apparent as soon as the narrative comes into play. The confrontational nature of Garrett and Erin's relationship soon fades into obscurity and a number of unwelcome supernatural elements work their way into the story and cause a disturbance. This is a game that is crying out for a dark, gritty take on storytelling – The City is in a state of turmoil and an ailment named 'The Gloom' is running rampant throughout its populace. We have to ask: where are the Robin Hood moments? Where is the enigmatic hero that fights for the weak and impoverished? Nowhere, it seems; he's far too busy chasing a load of magical shite. It becomes really hard to identify with Garrett, as little has been done to try and flesh out his character. Only the Thief-Taker General, Garrett's main rival, enjoys some exposition – everyone else may as well be an android.

There appears to be a real missed opportunity as far as the narrative goes, as the most interesting aspect of *Thief*'s



story is Garrett's relationship with the fairly sociopathic Erin. We would've loved to see this relationship develop in a different way, as the fragile nature of their friendship would have offered a perfect way to structure the story. What we are left with, though, is a supernatural tale that fails to hit the spot.

It's a real shame, as in terms of gameplay *Thief* is generally excellent. As well as the stealthy options, there are a few ways in which Garrett can dish out a bit of punishment. The most useful is the blackjack, with which Garrett can either whack people around the back of the head if unspotted to execute a takedown, or simply attack people head-on. It's worth bearing in mind, however, that attacking enemies at all is a dangerous affair. Garrett can only take four or five slashes from a guard's sword before he buys the farm, and so it's best to avoid combat as much as possible.

When in direct combat Garrett can utilise a slightly clunky dodge move, although we generally resorted to smacking R1 in desperation whenever we went toe-to-toe with an enemy, aimlessly hitting away with the blackjack until they crumpled. As soon as anyone else stepped in to help, though, we found the best option was to run away like a coward. Although running away from your problems seems like the right stance to adopt in both games and real-life, in *Thief* it doesn't quite have the desired effect, as all of the Baron's cronies are crazy fast and always seem to be able to catch you up. This becomes annoying later on, as it generally means that if you're spotted you

are as good as dead, without a hope of fighting back or being able to escape.

Graphically it hits the levels you'd expect on PS4, and a couple of slightly odd animations aside it all looks bloody superb. We would've liked to have seen a little more variation in terms of the environments though, as with the exception of a seedy, velvet-lined brothel and a fantastic mental asylum *Thief's* environmental design becomes fairly repetitive as time wears on. It's a double-edged sword, as through creating a dark, mysterious game world Eidos has slightly limited itself in terms of visual output.

It all feels like a brilliant framework held back by a few unsavoury elements. The hub-based world and other problems would've been less apparent if there was actually a decent narrative to prop the game up, but instead we're left with a half-baked tale that feels shallow and dissatisfying by the time you reach the end. Still, there is still plenty to be happy about here, with a wealth of great gameplay flares and a strong aesthetic. If there's a sequel, then opening the world up and allowing the characters some room to breathe will work wonders.

Steve Holmes

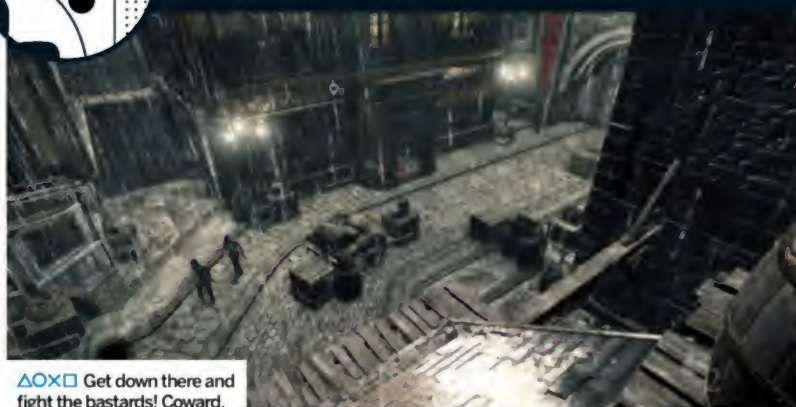
VERDICT

A robust and functional stealth game, *Thief* could've done with an open world and some better writing. Regardless, this is a good starting point for the resurrected franchise.

70%



PLAY CHALLENGE



△×□ Get down there and fight the bastards! Coward.

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



KEEP IT SECRET...

△ CAN YOU FIND all of the collectibles in *Thief* without using a guide? Do so and earn our undying admiration.



DOUBLE DOWN

□ CAN YOU DEFEAT four armed guards in open combat using only the blackjack? We tried and failed.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

OR YOU COULD TRY

△ **DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION** Same developer, same publisher, and yet *Deus Ex* is by far the superior title, blending stealth, action and sci-fi to great effect.

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2

Should carry a stealth warning



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
MercurySteam

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PRICE
£39.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
4.1GB

AGE RATING
18

WEBSITE

www.konami-castlevania.com

TWITTER

@CastlevaniaLOS

FACEBOOK

/CastlevaniaGame

Trophies 47



HAVING SURVIVED THE

PS2 era, we're fully aware of how dangerous stealth sections in games can be. After *Splinter Cell* made sneaking cool again, every action game seemed to draw from the same well, throwing in pointless, half-baked stealth missions to hit trend, tick a box, add a bullet point to a press release or whatever. But the simple truth is this: stealth in games that aren't based purely around the concept is almost *always* terrible. It's such a comedown from the empowering action you've been enjoying to that point that it doesn't so much change up the pace as ruin it entirely, your hero forced to arbitrarily sheathe blades or flick the safety back on when the balls-out approach has been serving just fine up until that loathsome scripted moment.

You can imagine our surprise, then, when we were asked to skulk around in the shadows as the Prince Of Darkness himself, using clouds of bats to distract lumbering mecha-gorilla-things and possessing swarms of rats to slip by them almost unnoticed. This is not what we signed up for. This is not *Castlevania*.

And this is sure as hell not Dracula, especially since in regular combat, a single button press can turn you into a massive smouldering dragon and nuke the entire arena. And it's a crying shame, because everything else about the game ticks all three of those boxes with a confident flick of blood – it's literally just the insistence on these dated and frankly rubbish stealth sections that lets the side down.

Without wanting to bang on about the single bad thing about an otherwise excellent game for too long, it's not even like they make sense. Sure, Dracula may have had the world's longest lie-in and as a result isn't at full power, but Gabriel showed with the original game that he doesn't need to sneak past shit. Giant colossus boss? Clamber all up on that fool and drop it. Legions of werewolves? Smashed to bits. But poor old Dracula can't even step on a few old leaves without alerting an angry goat and getting insta-killed. They're not all that common, that's one saving grace – they're generally used on your first visit to certain areas, presumably to give a better idea



△OX□ If you're not a fan of the sight of blood, we strongly recommend you look elsewhere for your next gaming fix. This one is messy...



△OX□ Boss battles are almost uniformly excellent, even if none are quite on the same scale as the original game's towering enemies.

of how to get around. But you don't need that, nor will you want that. When so much of the fun of a game where full exploration is made possible by learning abilities comes from looking around for places to try out your new skills, the last thing you want is to be led through a section by a trail of rat transformation points, buff guards to distract with a few bats and other assorted stealth mechanics that don't always work as they should.



△OX□ Turning into a swarm of rats is oddly entertaining, especially when the lumbering guards start stomping your ratty pals.

△OX□ Break everything -- experience orbs and relics can be found in many of the environmental objects.



PLAY VIDEO

Watch the review on our YouTube channel or your free disc, with team commentary

YouTube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

"YOU'LL MISS A LOT IF YOU JUST FOLLOW THE OBJECTIVE MARKER LIKE A GOOD LITTLE ASSASSIN'S CREED PLAYER"

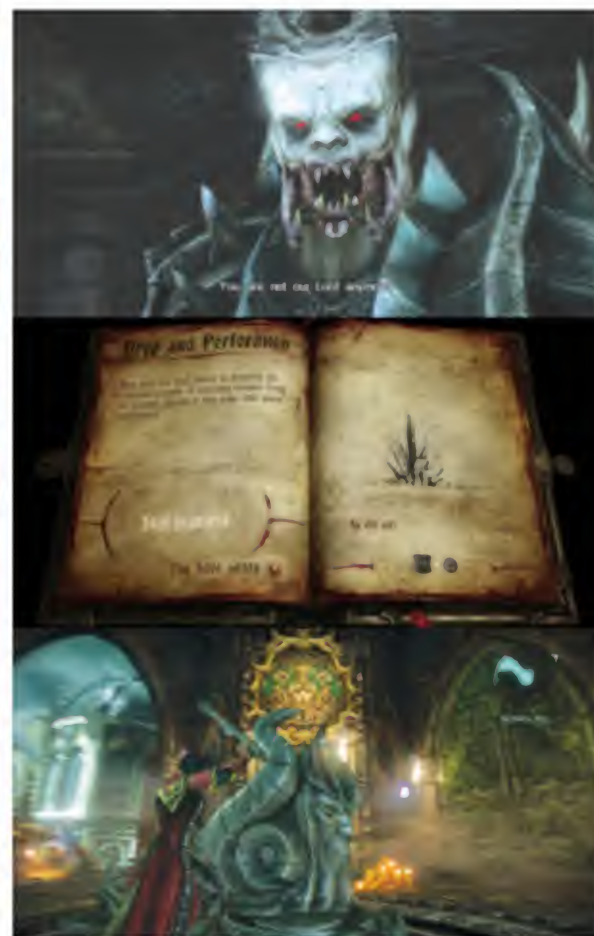


But that's more than enough about that. Onto the good stuff and man, there be plenty of that to talk about. Visuals are as good a starting point as any, and *Lords Of Shadow 2* even manages to surpass its beautiful predecessor in that department. Everything is ludicrously detailed and just as well designed, although it's Dracula's castle rather than the somewhat mundane modern day stuff that really shows this off best. Pretty much every other game is doing (or has done) modern day, and while it's an interesting place for Dracula to find himself, that doesn't necessarily make it an interesting place to explore. It's all a bit grey and familiar for the most part, the odd *Resident Evil*-esque lab or impressive landmark breaking that trend but still not coming close to match the majesty of Drac's castle, its gothic corridors, crumbling hazards and inexplicably awkward secret passages (top tip: never hide your stuff anywhere you can't readily reach in case you one day lose all your powers and have to unlock them again) all a joy to wander around. And, better yet, they're completely stealth-free. Hurrah.

Elsewhere, the simply awesome combat does an outstanding job of making the stealth seem even more laughable. Drac can parry blows all day long (the timing is pretty generous, as *3rd Strike* veterans will quickly notice) and deftly slip past them with ease provided you're up to the task, and linking these defensive tricks with all of the unlockable special attacks for the three main



△○×□ Yeah, Dracula's a bit of a messy eater. Blood can also be drained from stunned enemies, if you're quick enough.



weapons creates an impressive, flowing combat system. As in *DmC*, your regular arsenal of attacks can be modified with the triggers to employ new tools and skills. But while Dante's additional toys offered speed/area control and raw power, Dracula's grant life-leeching

through the Void Sword and armour-busting raw power courtesy of the Chaos Claws. In order to refill the meters that each drain, though, you need to be good – landing attacks fills a momentum gauge at the bottom of the screen and it isn't until this fills that you start to earn

this genre's traditional currency: orbs. Once they're released, clicking either stick will allow you to add the extra to the relevant reserve (L3 for Void, R3 for Chaos), so being mindful of enemy types and boss strategies is key when sucking up your rewards, Raziell-style. It all simmers beautifully together to create a satisfying and weighty combat system with more than enough of a risk/reward angle to please even those who call this genre home.

Equally strong is the cunning way MercurySteam has established in order to force players to switch up their attack

△○×□ Don't worry – platforming like this is both rare and not nearly as terrible as it usually is. Phew.

“EVERYTHING IS LUDICROUSLY DETAILED AND WELL DESIGNED”



△○×□ QTEs aren't too frequent or obtrusive – usually, any button will do the trick too.



patterns. While you can just *Dynasty Warriors* your way through most of the *God Of War* games, here you need to be more mindful of which attacks you're using. Every time a blow lands, your mastery of it increases slightly – fill that gauge and the mastery can be siphoned from the ability (just once) into the weapon itself, slowly powering it up in the process. It's far from a perfect system – we'd have loved to have seen more mastery levels for weapons than just basic, mid-tier and maxed-out – but it certainly keeps you experimenting. And – if you're playing on Hard, at least – you'll need to unlock and use every ability enough to max out your gear before heading to the final showdown. Only in a few instances (yep, bosses) does difficulty really spike, so Hard would be our go-to recommendation for most seasoned players – it's still not that tough, but a couple of the big guys might spank you a few times before you figure them out. Still, last we checked, that's sort of the point with games like this. *DMC3* isn't so highly regarded for being a walk in the park, after all.

BATS ALL, FOLKS

MercurySteam lays Castlevania to rest

While it's a little disappointing that *Sneaky Dracula* lets down the classic franchise's PS3 finale somewhat, we can't help but be excited by the idea of what MercurySteam will do next. The team has shown obvious skill in games centered around exploration and combat and, provided it can avoid another stealth-based howler, there's potential for this previously unknown developer to become one of the big players on PS4. With Sony Santa Monica moving onto other projects, Capcom busy making mobile games nobody wants or buys and Platinum doing whatever the hell it wants, heaven knows we need another developer in this genre that knows what it's doing. One more time, in case you (somehow) didn't get the message, guys... NO STEALTH NEXT TIME.



The game's structure is also praiseworthy in its own right, owing more to *Symphony Of The Night* than to the level-based, 16-bit layout of the original. The more of Dracula's powers you relearn, the more of the castle and the city opens up and, while much of this is linear, you'll miss a hell of a lot if you just follow the objective marker like a good little *Assassin's Creed* player. There are upgrades, skills and areas that can be ignored if you're not looking to get the most out of each power, making this a shorter game than the original if you don't but exceeding its play-time if you do. New Game+ only adds to this longevity, although the full reimbursement of XP does offset the increased difficulty. Still, even with those stealth sections that we keep banging on about, it's a game that deserves to be played

more than once – its highs easily outweigh its lows.

The cracking boss fights, of which there are plenty. The epic mob battles where Dracula comes out on top because Dracula. The thrill of having everything ripped from beneath your feet only to rise back to your former glory. Even the nods to *Castlevania*'s past, which will have long-term fans out of their seats before the setup lines have even finished. Yes, there's a hell of a lot that *Lords Of Shadow 2* does ridiculously well, which means there's also a hell of a lot of blame to be dumped on the person that signed off on stealth sections in a game where the point was playing as a vampire lord. Not only did you miss the point of character, franchise and genre, you also robbed a deserving game of a much higher score.

Luke Albigés



VERDICT

Frequent stealth sections stink up an otherwise outstanding sequel.

Combat is so good, though, that if you can endure the sneaking, it's still a bloody good action game.

81%

Outlast

Insane in the membrane



IT WAS A brave decision on Sony's part to make *Outlast* the free PlayStation Plus game of

February, and we applaud the company for it. Horror isn't a particularly inclusive genre, and a quick glance at the Trophy data for *Outlast* shows that the majority of people have given it a quick try before caving in and quitting before earning even the first Bronze. Still, we love horror here on **Play**, so a new example of the genre getting a featured spot for the month is fine with us.

Outlast belongs to the new breed of first-person indie horror games popularised by the excellent *Amnesia* on PC. Similarly to that title, *Outlast* offers its players no means with which to defend themselves. If an enemy sees you, your only option is to run, hide and hope you don't get found. It's a great template for real horror and the complete antithesis of the action-horror approach of *Dead Space* or newer *Resident Evil* titles.

Players control stupidly-named journalist Miles Upsur as he investigates the mysterious Mount Massive Asylum... alone... at night-time... with nothing but a video camera. The guy clearly isn't very smart (or hasn't watched many horror films) and lo and behold, quickly finds himself trapped in the asylum, hunted by the monstrous inhabitants that remain.

That's your basic setup for the next four to five hours of scares, and you'd be forgiven for finding it an unoriginal premise. *Outlast* has a slightly cheesy tone throughout, reminiscent of the outlandish, campy horror flicks of the Eighties more than the muted, bleak and realistic examples of the genre we tend to see today. That's not to say that *Outlast* isn't scary, but characters like a laughably crazy priest and muscular, naked twins who calmly discuss how they want to kill and eat you are a bit too over-the-top to ever be truly terrifying. This extends to the soundtrack too, full of violin shrieks to signify jump scares and the standard swelling, foreboding orchestral strains.

Still, for the most part *Outlast* nails the atmosphere of Mount Massive Asylum. Exploring the corridors and rooms slowly, unsure of what could lurk around any corner and all too aware of the noise you are making is thrilling, heart-in-mouth stuff. Huge areas of the asylum are drenched in total darkness, the player only able to advance by using the night vision mode on Miles's camera. This uses up battery power that must be topped up with spare batteries you can find conveniently lying about the place. On higher difficulties batteries are particularly scarce, which makes managing your resources crucial. However, should you run out of battery power, your night vision will merely dim rather than shut out entirely – a cop-out, perhaps, but a necessary one if you don't want the player to become stuck and lost in the dark forever.

Pulling up Miles's camera in pitch-blackness only to be greeted with a emaciated, crazed murderer immediately in front of you reminds us of doing a

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Red Barrels

DEVELOPER

Red Barrels

PSN PRICE

£15.99

PLAYERS

1

INSTALL SIZE

4.3 GB

AGE RATING

18

TWITTER

@TheRedBarrels

Trophies 8





△○×□ Coming upon light sources is a huge relief, except when they contain dead bodies and the people responsible.



"IF YOU ARE SPOTTED, FLEEING, HIDING AND HOPING YOUR PURSUER HAS LOST YOU IS YOUR ONLY OPTION"

similar thing back in the day in the *Project Zero* series, with a traditional camera and ghosts instead. If you are spotted, fleeing, hiding and hoping your pursuer has lost you is your only option. A button to look over your shoulder as you run is an excellent addition that accentuates the fact that if you've been seen, you need to get a bloody step on. On harder difficulties (the only way horror games should be played) you go down in a couple of hits, so getting cornered usually means the end. Checkpointing is sparse, and often the scariest concept is having to replay huge sections of the game. Sometimes it comes down to memorising the level and enemy layout over multiple tries – an issue, as familiarity is the absolute bane of horror. Once you know what's going to happen, you can't be scared by it.

Mostly though, *Outlast* is a fun, thrilling

and slightly ridiculous haunted house ride that will take you four or five hours, depending on how many exposition-leaking documents and notes you feel like picking up and perusing. It's not the scariest game we've ever played, but it's still a hell of a lot more frightening than most modern horror games. For free, there's no decision to make, but any horror fan that missed out on *Outlast* last month should definitely give it a look.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

A great example of the new wave of indie horror, *Outlast* isn't revolutionary or particularly terrifying, but some great jump scares and a fun, cheesy story make it well worth checking out.

73%



PLAY CHALLENGE



△○×□ What you can't see can't hurt you, right?

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



ARE YOU INSANE?

△ TRY FINISHING THE game on Insane difficulty, where if you die you have to start the entire game over again.



I EAT A LOT OF CARROTS

□ CAN YOU MAKE it through the whole game without using night vision once? We don't know if this one is even possible.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!





Toukiden: The Age Of Demons

Dynasty Warriors X Monster Hunter, basically



WITH CAPCOM

COSIED up in bed with Nintendo when it comes to *Monster Hunter*, the

legions of imitators continue to have Vita to themselves. And while none has yet managed to top PSP boss grind *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite*, a few have come close – *Soul Sacrifice* for one managed to capture a lot of the same magic while shifting the tone for the darker, forcing hunters to use their own blood and body parts to fuel powerful attacks. Having already failed at denting the genre once with the middling *Dynasty Warriors: Strike Force*, Omega Force wouldn't have been our first choice to fill the huge footprints left by Capcom's absent monster. But with *Toukiden* showcasing the best aspects of the team's own work with the *Warriors* series as well as some of the finer points of the monster hunting franchise from which it so liberally borrows, it's way better than we expected it to be. If imitation truly is the sincerest form of flattery then these guys must really, *properly* love *Monster Hunter*.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Tecmo Koei

DEVELOPER

Omega Force

RELEASE DATE

Out Now

PRICE

£29.99

PLAYERS

1-4

GENRE

Action-RPG

AGE RATING

12+

TWITTER

@tecmokoeiurope

INSTALL SIZE

1.9 GB

Trophies 50



Weapon selection and upgrades, quest structure, segmented maps, towering boss monsters to dismember, crafting and the open village will all feel instantly familiar to anyone who has ever been near a *Monster Hunter* game. But instead of dragons, wyverns and beasts, your prey here are Oni – hideous demons that run rampant in the village's surrounding areas and must be cut down to size. Breaking key body parts in *Monster Hunter* is a way of negating particular attacks or scoring extra loot but here, it's much more of a key mechanic. Every boss Oni has multiple breakable parts and when they are removed, they must be purified. Doing so not only earns materials and other goodies but also reduces the life force of the enemy. Fail to purify any severed body parts in time and the Oni may regenerate any missing bits, and limbs, horns and whatnot often come back stronger than before, so you need to avoid that at all costs – many of these guys are tough enough as it is, even for *Monster Hunter* veterans like us.

Making life a little bit easier is the supporting AI, with other characters joining you in pretty much every mission. While *MH*'s Felyne companions (and Cha-Cha in *Tri*) only really serve as distractions to occasionally buy you some breathing room, this merry band of warriors can actually hold their own in battle. They're not especially smart – we once watched Fugaku run back and forth for ages chasing worms as they burrowed all over an arena for about ten minutes without managing to land a single hit – but they get the job done. They break body parts, play to their style's strengths and even use supporting abilities at crucial times. And with a host of different warriors to choose from, it's easy to put





△×□ This guy might take some time to drop, but the gear you can make from his bits is awesome.



△×□ Emphasis on story and characters is rare in games like this, but it works pretty well.



"OMEGA FORCE MUST REALLY, PROPERLY LOVE MONSTER HUNTER"

NOW HIRING... Come hunt with us



With so many variables at work, it can often be difficult to find a group around your gear and skill level who want to be hunting the same beasts as you. So here's a quick fix from the friendly folks at **Play** – just tag along with us. Luke (PSN: PorthMinster) has been rinsing the game for weeks and is getting properly geared up, and he's willing to help out any Slayers in need. He mainly uses the daggers and can usually be seen darting around the sky, hacking up those hard-to-reach body parts. So if you need a hand, drop him a line on PSN and assuming he's not neck-deep in a *FFXIV* raid (a dangerous assumption to make), he'll probably lend a helping blade. Well, two.

together a perfect party tailored around both your own character and your quarry.

As is expected from the genre, it's not just about killing the big guys – it's about killing them over and over again in the hunt for rare drops. With only defence tied to armour and not skills, farming better outfits isn't quite so pressing as it is in *Monster Hunter*, but you'll still want to work on a number of weapons so as best to enable you to exploit Oni's elemental weaknesses. What you might want to farm instead of armour pieces, though, are Mitama, souls of fallen heroes that occasionally drop from enemies and can be tied to weapons in order to gain their abilities. Getting new ones is pretty rare and upgrading them is a laborious process, but with buffs and perks getting better every level, it's blatantly worth it.

While there aren't such clear difficulty spikes here as in *Monster Hunter*, a slow and steady escalation of challenge can present similar bottlenecks. Gear can be slightly improved by the village blacksmith between missions and naturally, your skill and experience will grow over time too. These elements sort of counteract the rise in difficulty for a

while, but when you stop learning or your gear caps out it won't take long for things to get tricky. As such, you'll find you need to rotate gear and Mitama regularly before the game forces you to relearn everything by introducing nasty surprises such as unleashing multiple bosses at once or having giant Oni ambush you during seemingly simple missions. Which is just rude.

Monster Hunter still wins out in terms of depth and variety, but Omega Force manages to nail so many of the other elements that make Capcom's game so satisfying. And since Capcom is busy sleeping with the enemy, we have no hesitation in heralding *Toukiden* as the best *Monster Hunter* game on Vita.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Monster Hunter clones are as common on Vita as they were on PSP, but this is the best yet. With awesome bosses, weapons and abilities, *Toukiden* is simply superb.

86%

REVIEW ROUND-UP

HD REMAKES HAVE proven themselves to be big business on PS3, with gamers eager to throw money at even slightly up-scaled versions of their old favourites. But you can't make an HD remake of something that was already HD, can you? Yeah... try again. **TOMB RAIDER: DEFINITIVE EDITION [1]** is a port of last year's *Uncharted*-esque reboot to the franchise, leaping from 720p 30fps to 1080p 60fps on PS4 and boasting myriad other tweaks and fixes that make it both look and run significantly better. While Lara's face and TressFX-powered hair (because she's worth it) might have changed, little has on a gameplay level.

Not that this is a bad thing, mind, since the original was awesome, but it offers little real incentive beyond visual fidelity for anyone that has already seen the credits already to double-dip. It does look damn nice, it has to be said, but there's also some of the filmic quality that comes with 30fps lost which, if you played the original on PS3, may feel odd. One of last year's better games (and that's saying

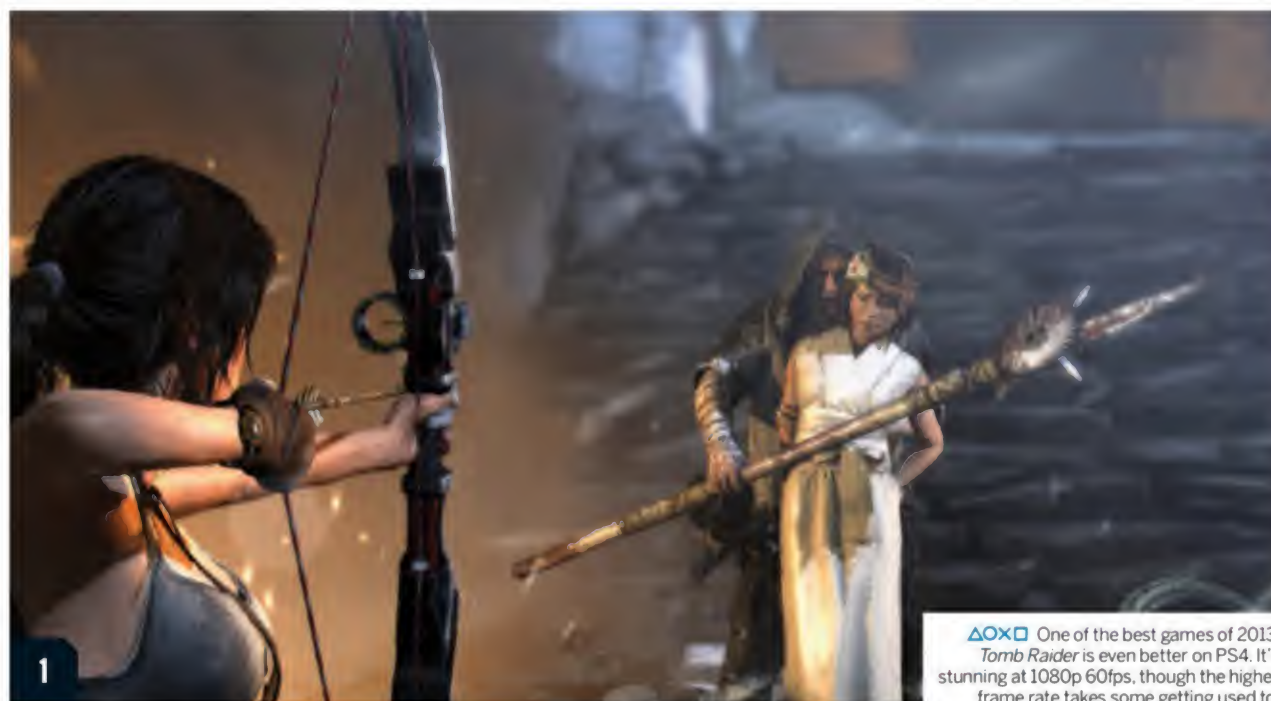
something – it was a vintage year from *Revengeance* to *Resogun*), if you've not played Tomb Raider yet then this is undeniably the best version to go for. And port or no, it's still another big name in the PS4 library mere months into the console's life, which can only be a good thing.

Lara scrubs up well then, but Capcom – no stranger to scrubs, having unleashed Ken upon the world – has some scrubbing of its own to do. **DUSTFORCE [2]** came out on PC in 2012, the cleaning-based indie

“IF YOU’VE NOT PLAYED TOMB RAIDER YET THEN THIS IS THE VERSION TO GO FOR”

platform game only now finding its way to consoles via the big-name publisher and its nose for success. And it's... well, it's about as much fun as you might expect a game with cleaning as a central mechanic to be, actually. Platformers are a common go-to choice for indie teams, but while some (*N+*, *Super Meat Boy*) manage to upstage even the biggest brands in the genre, it's

no longer an easy sell. *Dustforce*'s use of debris and filth as a way of hinting at the perfect route through a level is neat (ironically) but controls simply don't feel up to the task at hand – one failed wall-run, ceiling grab or slide and all momentum is lost, basically killing runs on levels that are almost too long in the first place and forcing restarts. It does feel good when it all comes together, sure, but checkpoints and fiddly menus in a score attack platformer are cardinal sins. That's where *OlliOlli* got it so right by having the restart option on-screen at all times. You can't encourage perfection while facilitating adequacy. And it's for that reason that *Dustforce* simply doesn't stack up to the genre leaders, asking players to pull together impressive speed-runs without quite offering the tools – or much of an incentive – for them to do so.



△○×□ One of the best games of 2013, *Tomb Raider* is even better on PS4. It's stunning at 1080p 60fps, though the higher frame rate takes some getting used to.

△○×□ Each area has its own feel but gameplay seldom changes all that much. Multiplayer is just a tacked-on extra, too.





But while *Dustforce*'s minimal presentation has something of a calming quality to it – which is admittedly at odds with the rest of the hardcore platforming genre – **GUNHOUSE [3]** is an intense sketchpad explosion of vibrant colour and often dangerously busy creativity. The PlayStation Mobile title (also playable on Vita) fuses tower defence and tile-based puzzle action to create a novel experience that rapidly juggles the stresses of the former and the simplicity of the latter. Slide tiles to make bigger blocks and then load them into weapons, then use these to fend off the attacking hordes – it's a cycle that repeats quickly and manages to bring an element of quick-thinking to a genre where typically, simply knowing what is



coming is enough to guarantee success. It feels like being on the losing side of a tense *Puzzle Fighter* battle, your speed in being able to clock workable patterns based on the game's basic mechanics and load weapons accordingly the only thing that determines whether you triumph or fail horribly. It's often the latter, but with weapon upgrades carrying over between runs, skill in the puzzle side of things will eventually see you come out on top. And with smart visuals, *Fez* noisenik Disasterpiece bleeping the bloops and an asking price less than that of most draught beers, it's a pretty easy recommendation.

As too is **CASTLESTORM: COMPLETE EDITION [4]**, actually, but then that's largely since the rest of the world has recommended it already. The game first came out in November last year (and even earlier on 360), although the avalanche



△○×□ Sieging castles has more than a faint whiff of *Angry Birds* about it. There's plenty of variety, though.

of awesome games around then and some little thing called the PlayStation 4 meant that we never got to give it the love it deserved at the time. But this new DLC-included bundle offers us the chance to repent for our sins. Much like *Gunhouse*, this is tower defence with a twist, here with said twist being player accuracy and skill instead of the mobile title's emphasis on puzzle game prowess. It's a physics-based affair (this is a game from the *Zen Pinball* team, so you know they've got that noise DOWN) so each ballista shot or crossbow bolt will arc accurately – learning your timings and trajectories isn't so much half the battle as most of it. You can also spawn minions, cast spells, design your own castles and summon heroes in a pinch, so it's far more involved than most tower defence games, plus it lends itself brilliantly to Vita's touch screen and is a Cross-Buy title. Get involved – you'll never look at an accuracy stat the same way again.

△○×□ If things are still alive, you're doing it wrong.



HOW TO STREAM FROM YOUR PS3

Many gamers will have had their first taste of streaming thanks to the built-in features on PS4. Broadcasting your gameplay live over Twitch or Ustream is easy, and popular users can have thousands of viewers hovering over their digital shoulder as they play. The thing is, while the PS4 is still building up a library of great games, there's a ton of awesome stuff on PS3 that you might fancy streaming too. It's not as easy, sure, but it's still simple enough that even the most technologically illiterate will be able to get a stream up and running without much trouble. As such, here's a quick rundown of what you'll need, where it goes and what it all does that will allow you to stream pretty much whatever you like...



Buy a streaming device

If you want to stream on your PS3, you'll need to buy a device that allows you to do so. The best value for money in our opinion is the Elgato Game Capture HD, which you can pick up on Amazon for about £120. Search around and weigh up your options, but you'll probably need to be spending at least £100. This guide is for the Elgato software but whatever you buy, the steps are going to be similar.



Download the software

You'll also need a computer, but it's 2014 so we're going to assume this isn't an issue. Next, you'll need to download the software for your device. If you plumped for the Elgato, you'll want to visit www.gamecapture.com/download. For another device, the software you need should either be included or available on the manufacturer's website. Most devices will have simple bespoke software that should be similar to the example we will use.



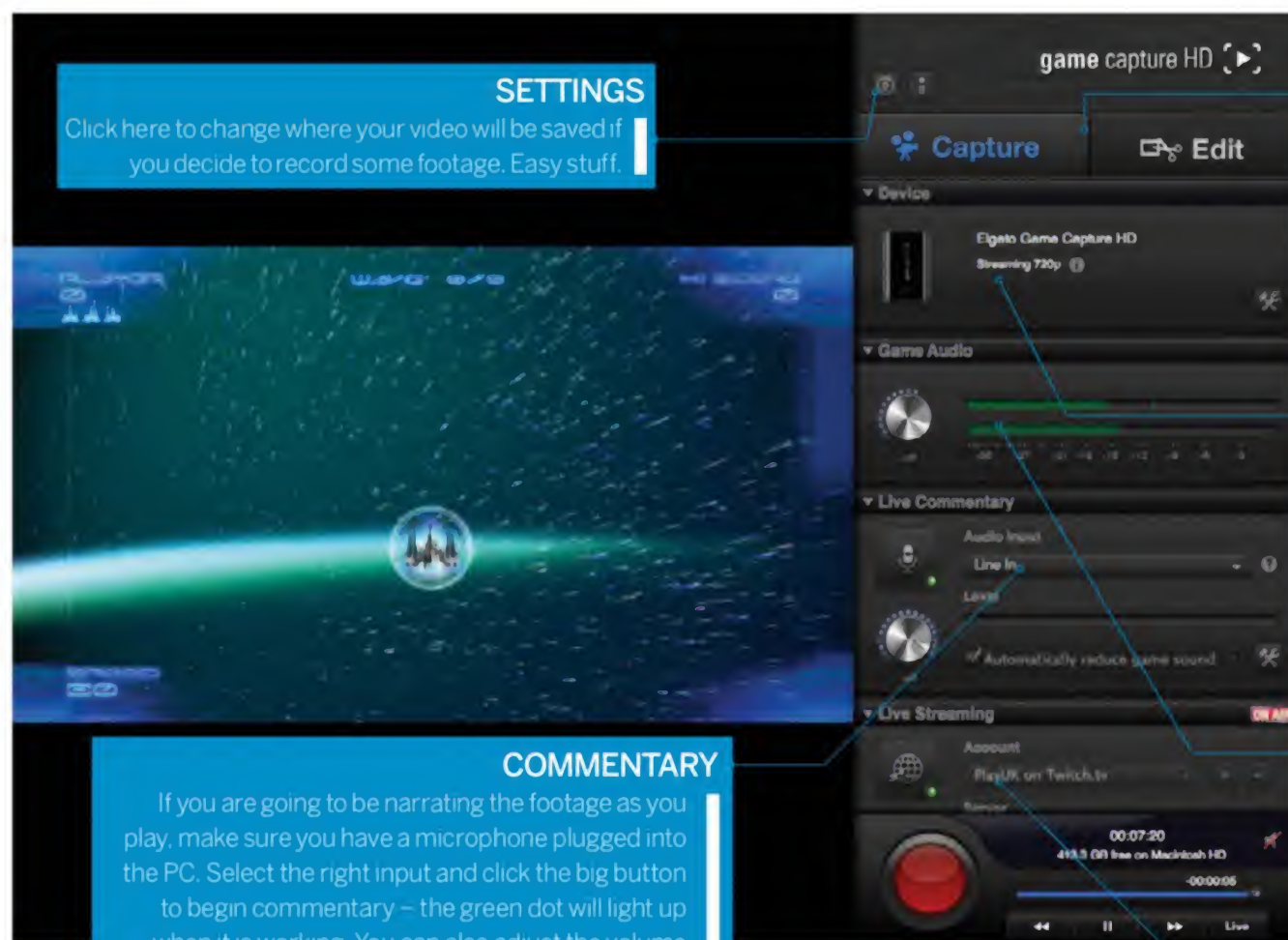
Hook it up

Time to connect everything. With the Elgato, there are three wires you'll need (all are included with the device). The first is a specific one that attaches your PS3 to the device: you'll want to plug it into the AV MULTI OUT port in the back of your console. Next, an HDMI cable will run from the HDMI OUT port of the capture kit to the television. Finally, you'll want to plug the kit into your computer with a mini-USB. Simple!



Fire it up

Start the program and turn on your console – make sure your display setting on the PS3 is set to COMPONENT/ D-TERMINAL. If everything is set up correctly, you'll see screens like those over the page, with the PS3 feed coming through the computer as well as your TV. When the PS4 update that disables HDMI protection comes in, you'll be able to use capture kits like this to stream from PS4 without the usual hardware restrictions.



SETTINGS

Click here to change where your video will be saved if you decide to record some footage. Easy stuff.

CAPTURE/EDIT

For streaming or recording gameplay you'll want to be on the Capture tab. You can switch to the Edit tab later on if you've got some recorded footage that you want to tinker with.

DEVICE

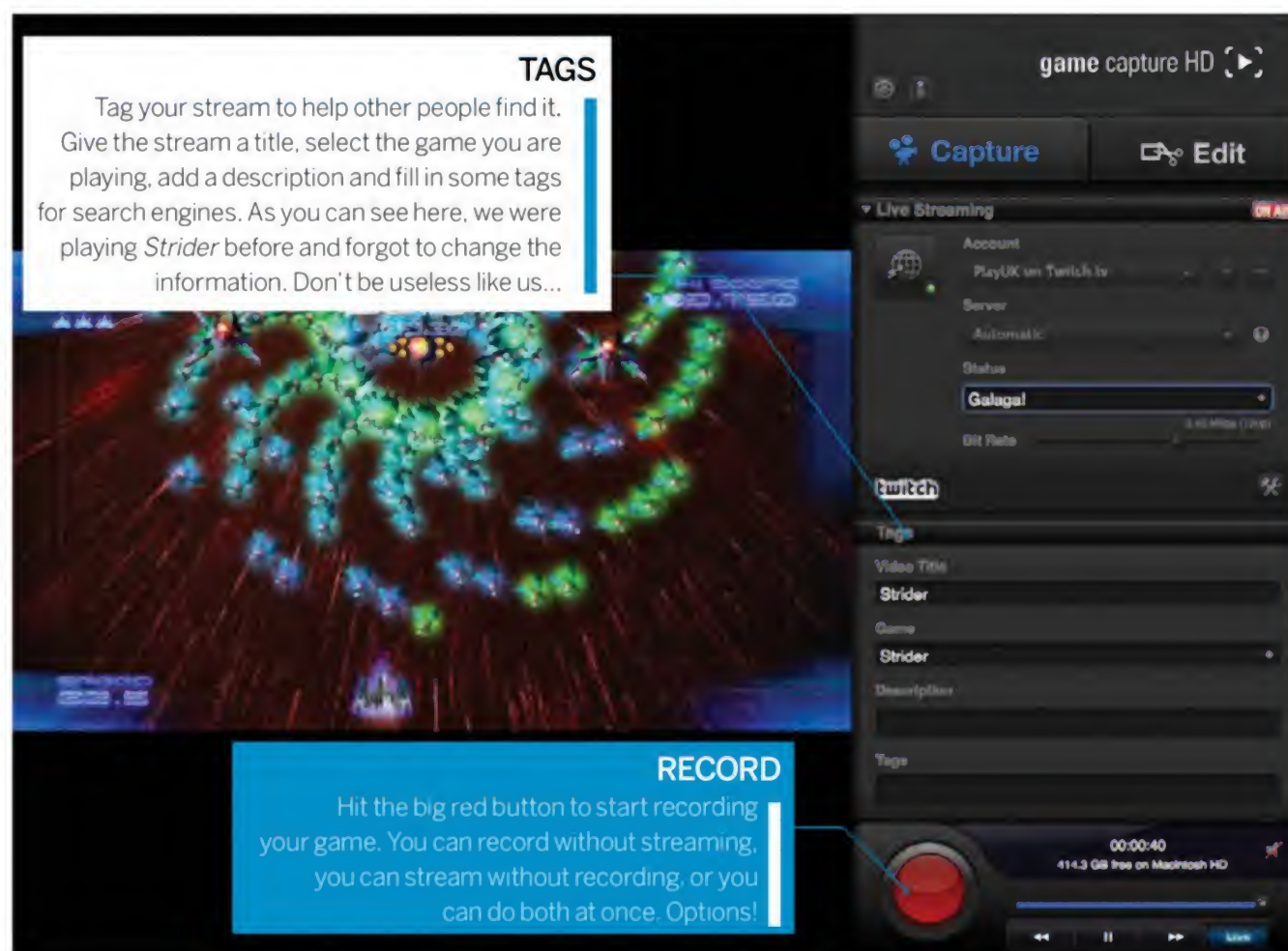
You can switch between different capture devices here, but odds are you'll just have the one, unless you are attempting some elaborate multi-game streaming shenanigans somehow.

AUDIO

Exactly what it says on the tin: make sure the game audio is at the right level, not too quiet or too loud.

COMMENTARY

If you are going to be narrating the footage as you play, make sure you have a microphone plugged into the PC. Select the right input and click the big button to begin commentary – the green dot will light up when it is working. You can also adjust the volume of your voice and choose an option to automatically reduce the game's volume when you talk.



TAGS

Tag your stream to help other people find it. Give the stream a title, select the game you are playing, add a description and fill in some tags for search engines. As you can see here, we were playing *Strider* before and forgot to change the information. Don't be useless like us...

STREAMING

Here is where you set up streaming through Twitch. If you don't have a Twitch account yet, head over to the website and make one. Then, select it in the Account tab.

When you want to start streaming, click the big button. Once the dot turns green, you are on-air! It's best to leave the server setting to Automatic unless you have a specific one in mind or net issues make selecting one necessary.

Change your status, which is what people will see above your video. Tell them what game you are playing, or how you feel. Change the bit-rate – the quality of the stream. A higher bit-rate will result in a better quality video, but will more taxing on your PC and the internet connections of yourself and your viewers.

RECORD

Hit the big red button to start recording your game. You can record without streaming, you can stream without recording, or you can do both at once. Options!

INTERVIEW

RISING STARS

ON PITCHING, DEVELOPING AND DISTRIBUTING AS AN INDIE ON VITA

We chat to Tom Hegarty, director at OlliOlli developer Roll7, and Graham Smith of Guacamelee! developer Drinkbox Studios about their experiences as Vita indie developers and working with Sony



△○×□ Drinkbox's Graham Smith speaks highly of Sony's manner of dealing with indies.



△○×□ This guy made OlliOlli. What do you say? Say thank you to the nice man.

How did you go about pitching your games to Sony?

TH: It was James Marsden at FuturLab (creators of Vita game *Velocity Ultra*) who put us in touch with Sony. We met him randomly and we thought we'd show him our game because he was wearing skateboarding type clothes. He did like it and he sent Sony an email that introduced us to each other.

We put our first *OlliOlli* pitch to Sony, who came back to us saying that we should be asking for more money given what we wanted to create, but that it did want what we pitched. I've been running my own businesses for ten years, and that's not how it works – normally you're asked to do more than you pitched and for less money.

GS: Actually, Sony approached us about doing a Vita game just as we were finishing *About A Blob* (PS3). We wanted to do a follow-up to that, and it just so happened that he had enough time at that point to get *Mutant Blobs Attack* ready for the Vita launch.

Sony was really good about getting us proper access to hardware and generally helping us get the game ready for the Vita's launch. Its guys are at every industry event, including GDC, PAX and Indiecade, and they are very knowledgeable about games.

How much input does Sony have during the development period?

TH: We had a weekly chat with our producer at Sony, which turned out to be a very good thing because he's always there for support. He would also take the latest builds we'd made to the Sony testers and then would give us their feedback.

The nice thing about that is they don't expect you to take their advice on board, but that doesn't stop them from giving it. We would come out of every meeting thinking their advice was terrible, but a week later we would generally decide it was actually quite good. There are things we changed about the game as a result of their feedback.

GS: After our initial concept was approved, Sony was pretty hands-off unless you actually asked for help and wanted more involvement. The people at Sony play tons of games themselves and we have in the past sent them builds and gotten their feedback on what we're doing.

Would you be able to make the games you have without Vita's strong digital distribution presence?

TH: It would certainly have been a lot harder to get *OlliOlli* made without the digital side. I've seen contracts for boxed copy games and it's really serious stuff. It's a massive risk and it

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△×□ Drinkbox's debut, *Guacamelee!*, earned the studio a ton of deserved praise.

puts smaller companies like us off from pursuing that angle. For our first console title I don't think we'd have been able to go through with it – the cost is just too prohibitive.

GS: I think we would have still started up Drinkbox and made games if digital distribution didn't exist, but I do think things would be very different for us. We'd have needed a publisher for distribution. Depending on how much input that publisher would want, our games may have turned out to be very different from how they are now.

Do you worry that Vita hardware sales are not particularly high?

TH: I don't think it has sold as well as a lot of people were anticipating, that's true. From our perspective, though, this has been a great opportunity – we've made our first console title and we've made it alongside a major platform holder.

Plus, from what I've seen the sales figures are increasing. They're not near the 3DS, that's true, but I think it's moving in the right direction.

GS: I think the low sales have nothing to do with the Vita's quality. I don't know anyone who has purchased one and been disappointed. The proliferation of smartphones has had a bigger impact on sales, I think. There are a lot of people that want a quick gaming fix while commuting and they will be reluctant to buy an expensive gaming machine when they already have a phone with thousands of free games on it.

How is developing for Vita different from other formats?

TH: After releasing *Gets To The Exit* on iOS in 2012, we knew we needed to go to consoles. Vita is different for us because we can make the kind of 'hardcore' games

we've wanted to make. You get all kind of gamers on smartphones, but they do tend to be more casual.

The Vita means we have a real hardcore gamer set as an audience, players that bought the console to play the kinds of hardcore games we want to make. It's early days for us, but moving to Vita does seem to be paying off.

GS: For *Guacamelee!* we were always designing it to work on both PS3 and Vita. However, the two platforms are very different from each other and games won't necessarily naturally work on both. We ran into problems in the fact that the Vita has fewer buttons than the PS3 and *Guacamelee!* was already using everything available on a PS3 controller. We mapped some controls to the Vita's D-pad originally, but negative feedback at E3 forced us to change that and use the touch screen.



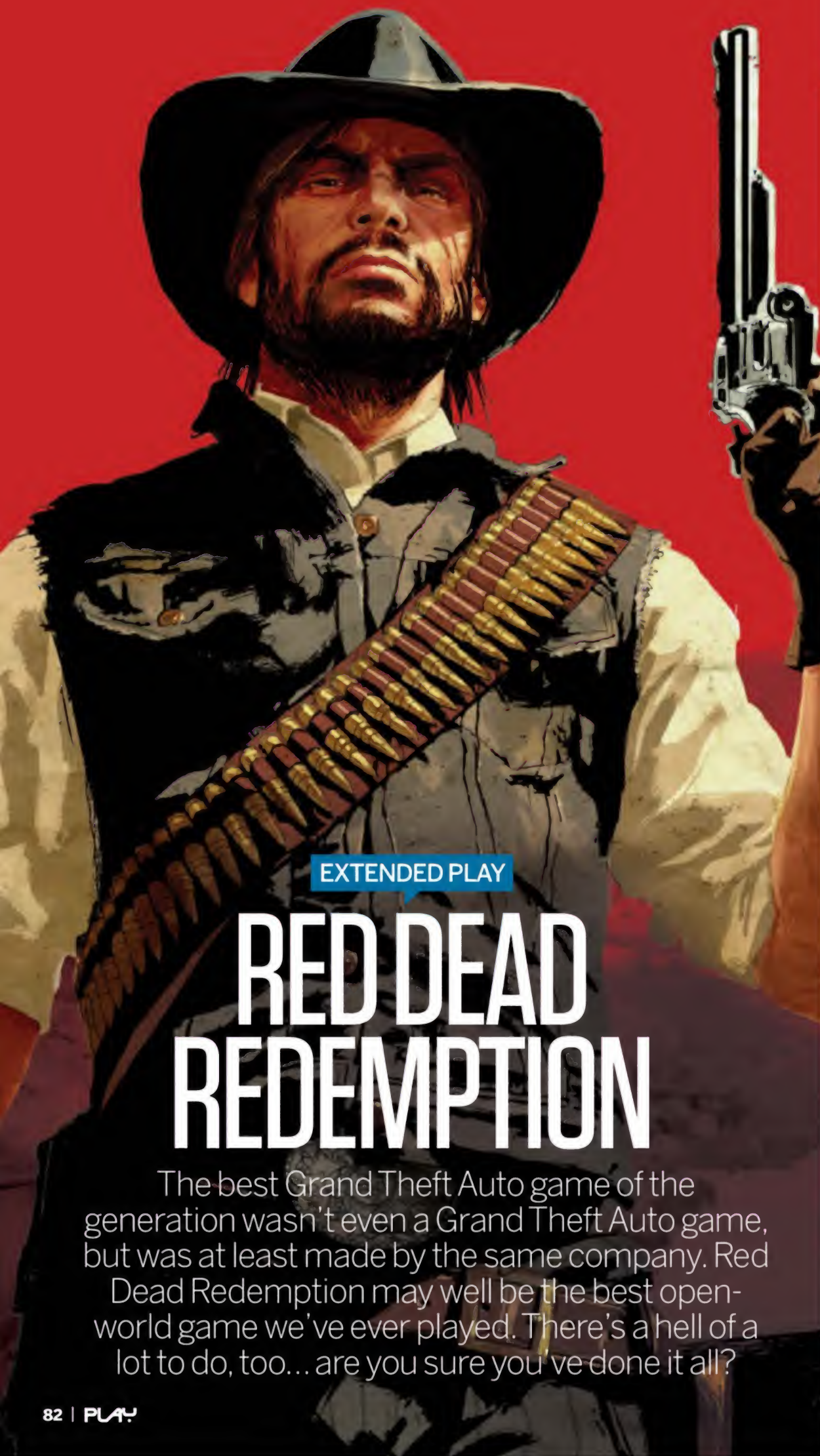
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PSN PRICING

How do you set a price on Sony's PS Store?

■ "Pricing is our decision," explains Hegarty. "We sell the game to Sony at a wholesale price and they then put their digital store mark on top of that to arrive at a final price. It's how the App Store and Google Play store work. "We could have sold *OlliOlli* for £40 if we wanted, but I don't think it would have sold many copies. We just looked at other indie titles and based our price on that. Ports like *Spelunky* and *Hotline Miami* are £10 to £12 – they were higher profile than us so we went lower at £8. Then we converted that into US dollars and Euros."



EXTENDED PLAY

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

The best Grand Theft Auto game of the generation wasn't even a Grand Theft Auto game, but was at least made by the same company. Red Dead Redemption may well be the best open-world game we've ever played. There's a hell of a lot to do, too... are you sure you've done it all?

UNDEAD NIGHTMARE (DLC)

■ **EASILY THE BIGGEST** piece of DLC for *Red Dead Redemption*, and one of the best examples of great DLC from the last generation, *Undead Nightmare* is essentially a completely new game. While adding zombies to everything has been done to death (haha) at this point, back in 2010 it was still a pretty novel idea.

Undead Nightmare is huge, almost as big as the main game itself. This isn't some throwaway piss-about with no structure either; this is a proper campaign with a story, side-missions and secrets to find. Seeing all the characters you've come to know over the course of the real game thrown into a bizarre horror scenario is great fun, particularly as some seem to adapt to the situation remarkably well (selling snake oil to cure zombification, anyone?)

Rockstar did a wonderful job of spreading the zombie ethos through every aspect of the game. Players now hunt undead versions of cougars, bears, wolves and so on, but amusingly can also track down and kill mythical creatures like the Sasquatch, Chupacabra and unicorns. John can even find and tame the four horses of the apocalypse, using them as mounts. It doesn't take itself seriously at all and it's excellent.

You can pick up a disc version of *Undead Nightmare* that doesn't require the original to play, or purchase it as DLC via the wonders of PSN. If you are a *Red Dead* fan who has yet to make the plunge, you are missing out. The old adage of 'zombies make everything better' has never rung more true than it does here.



POKER (MINI-GAME)

■ **WE IMAGINE THAT** a fair few gamers out there learnt to play poker thanks to *Red Dead*. While we are card-slinging veterans, *RDR*'s take on the classic was somehow engaging enough that we found ourselves sinking hours into Texas Hold 'Em in the Old West. We don't know whether it's the smoky surroundings, the twanging guitar in the background or just the fact that you are a cowboy playing poker with other cowboys, but the poker in *Red Dead* is arguably the most enjoyable version of cards we've yet seen in a videogame.

There are a bunch of other mini-games to eat up your time, from horseshoe tossing to the surprisingly addictive five-finger-fillet. There's a lot more to the Old West than hunting and shooting, after all.

MULTIPLAYER (ONLINE)

■ **THE ONLINE MULTIPLAYER** in *Red Dead Redemption* can be seen as a test run for many of the features that Rockstar would later include in *Grand Theft Auto V*. Players can mess about in an open world to their heart's content, except here there are up to 15 other people in the same world also doing as they please. Team up, form a posse and go rake down some bandits, or just ride around killing other people and ruining their fun.

There are also a bunch of more structured multiplayer modes, from your standard deathmatch through to imaginative takes on capture the flag. A few extra modes were added in through various DLC packs, including a couple in *Undead Nightmare*. There probably aren't all that many people still playing *Red Dead* online, but if you can gather a few friends together and go ranching in the Old West via the power of the internet, you're in for a great time.

PS3
RedDeadDev4



HARDCORE MODE (DIFFICULTY)

■ **THE GAME OF THE Year** edition of *Red Dead Redemption* adds Hardcore Mode, ramping up the challenge for players who want a more realistic Wild West experience. There are a crazy amount of changes, from expert aiming and maximum health being reduced by half to the amount of money and ammunition dropped by enemies being lowered.

One of the most interesting changes is that horses no longer regenerate. If the player's horse is killed, they must buy or steal a new one. It's an interesting way to play the game that puts far more focus on money and resource management, feeling more like a survival sim at times. You ain't a real cowboy until you've finished Hardcore Mode.



TROPHY GUIDE

PS PLUS
TROPHY
GUIDE

It's getting to the point where you might as well not bother buying any games, because even the very best get put on PS Plus now. February gave PS3 gamers *BioShock Infinite* and *Metro: Last Light*, while *ModNation Racers: Road Trip* and *Dynasty Warriors Next* are the pair of 'treats' offered for Vita owners. PS4 gamers got horror game *Outlast* too, so there's something for every Trophy hunter this month...



BIOSHOCK INFINITE

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 2/5

■ A LARGE PORTION of *BioShock Infinite*'s Trophies will unlock as you progress through the game, whether it's story-based unlocks or Trophies awarded for particular kill types – you'll get most of these naturally, but keep an eye on the Trophies so you know what to use and when. The real focus for the Platinum revolves around completing the special 1999 Mode, which ups the difficulty quite a lot.

Usually you'd need to unlock this mode after completing the game, but as difficulty Trophies stack you might want to consider the following trick to unlock the mode from the off. Highlight the 'Play Game' option in the main menu then press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Circle, X, Start – voila!

Not only is 1999 Mode more difficult thanks to more powerful enemies (with a larger health pool, too), but you can't actually buy anything from a Dollar Bill machine for the Trophy 'Scavenger Hunt' – this means you'll need to be wary of ammo at all times. Make sure you combine your Vigors with your shots to deal more damage, and don't forget you can upgrade your weapons too. As for collectables, it's probably worth following a guide as you go – Voxophones will remain collected regardless of whether you replay a chapter, however Infusions will always reset to whatever they were at that point in time, so you'll need to collect every single one of them in order, sadly.



METRO: LAST LIGHT

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 2/5

■ SO YOU KNOW, getting the Platinum on *Metro: Last Light* will require two entire playthroughs since the game has a good and a bad ending. The good news is that you don't need to play on a hard difficulty, so if you're just in it for the Trophies then sticking it on Easy is possible, making it much easier to get everything you need. Whether or not you get the 'good' ending will depend on a large number of factors (and you'll never really know throughout the game) but by and large if you save the two villains at the end of the game, obey the Little Dark Ones and kill as few enemies as possible (especially the ones who have surrendered) then you'll work towards the good ending – don't forget the side missions, though, such as finding the girl's teddy bear or even listening to certain conversations. There's a Trophy for never killing anyone you don't have to (the only person you can kill is a flamethrower soldier at the end of the game) so it's probably best to work towards this at the same time. On the second playthrough, just do the opposite.

There are collectibles and the like too, most of which need to be found in a single playthrough – make sure you keep an eye out for them. Of particular note are the 17 musical instruments throughout the game; make sure you find and activate each of those.



DYNASTY WARRIORS NEXT

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 4/5

■ AS WITH ALL of the *Dynasty Warriors* games, this PS Vita version will take an exceptional amount of time to complete. It's a grind having to unlock every weapon, character and their alternative skins – if you're embarking on this Platinum hunt, be prepared for a lot of repetition. The longest grind for this will be to unlock 'Family Ties' and 'Master Matchmaker', which will require getting all officers to swear their oath to you for the former and getting a marriage pact with all officers for the latter. It will require playing Conquest mode at least 78 times; so keep track of who and when and just keep chipping away at it (possibly for the rest of your life). The rest of the Trophies available in *Dynasty Warriors Next* are fairly obvious and should pop over the course of general play without too much trouble – it's only those two massive grinds you really need to worry about.



MODNATION RACERS: ROAD TRIP

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 3/5

■ WHILE MODNATION RACERS: *Road Trip*'s Trophies are an unimaginative bunch, they are frustratingly restricted by the fact you need to have at least ten downloads of one of your created tracks, cars and characters. Work on these first (you'll get a Trophy just for creating each) but it all comes down to whether or not your creations are found – if you have ten friends with Vitas, it might be worth getting them to play this for your Trophies.

After that it's just a case of ticking off each of the Career race events by finishing first in each of the tracks, beat all the developer lap times as well as the challenges for each stage. The rest of the Trophies will come naturally, especially since you'll need to collect 100,000XP to reach level 28. The community for *ModNation Racers: Road Trip* will have picked up thanks to it being featured on PS Plus, so keep an eye out for brand new tracks uploaded to the game – if you're the first player to place on a leaderboard, you'll unlock 'Pioneer Racer' and 'Top of the Ladder' simultaneously.



OUTLAST

PLATFORM: PS4 DIFFICULTY: 1/5

■ SADLY LAST MONTH'S PS Plus PS4 game doesn't come with a Platinum. In fact, *Outlast* only has eight Trophies to collect, five of which will unlock just for finishing the game. After you do finish it you'll unlock Insane Mode, which has a Gold Trophy for finishing it. And after that, it's just collecting all documents and recordings – since it's a fairly linear experience, you should have no problem finding these.

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FINAL FANTASY XIV

SIX MONTHS ON

If you only dabbled in the beta or played a bit of the free trial period when it first launched, here are just a few of the current (and forthcoming) reasons to head back to Eorzea when A Realm Reborn arrives on PS4 next month



REBALANCED CLASSES

■ **BACK IN THE PS3** beta, we first picked the Marauder on the promise of a pirate background and high damage output courtesy of a huge axe. Little did we know that this was actually one of the game's two Tank classes (and the lesser of the two by far, at the time), nor the responsibility this would bring. Today, Square does a better job of letting players know what they're letting themselves in for when creating a character, plus the 2.1 patch gave a bunch of welcome buffs to the classes that needed them and generally levelled the playing field. You'll still find that late-game groups may ask for certain classes specifically due to their specialisations but generally speaking, the first major patch did a great job of making players a little more accommodating towards all professions. And hey, there's nothing to stop you from putting in a little time and levelling a few different jobs anyway – people always want to run the earlier dungeons (which now grant significantly more XP, making them quicker for power-levelling than FATE grinding in many cases) so it's not too much of a stretch to get multiple classes to 50.

THE CRYSTAL TOWER

■ **THE LAST FEW** eight-player story dungeons get pretty hectic, but that's nothing compared to the madness of the Crystal Tower's 24-person raids. Adventurers are split into three parties of eight, with some cunning design forcing parties to adapt to each battle that stands between them and the boss and its loot – some allow all 24 heroes to just let loose and a crazy fireworks show ensues, others encourage group positioning via gimmicks while some divide the band into its three parties and

force each to work alone. It's chaos, but it's great fun, even if the poor old PS3 seems to struggle a little at times with so much going on. Not a problem we can imagine seeing in the PS4 version, so that's another reason for end-game players to think about upgrading. With several pieces of high-grade loot up for grabs on each run (only one per player per week, mind) and plenty of Tomes (end-game currency) dished out, Crystal Tower runs are worthwhile for more than just the awesome experience.



DUTY ROULETTE/ MORE INSTANCES

■ **DUNGEONS AND RAIDS** are a crucial part of any MMO, but with many woven into the narrative of *FFXIV*, finding ways to ensure new players wouldn't have to wait for hours or beg for parties just to further the story was a top priority for Square. And in Duty Roulette, it found such a solution. Players can now sign up for Roulette to be entered into a random instance, with loads of Gil and XP (and even Tomes for L50 players) offered as a daily reward to keep you coming back and giving newcomers support. New instances have been added too, with more coming in each major update. Hauke Manor now has a Hard Mode variant, as does Copperbell Mines and you can even take on Good King Moogle Mog XII if you like, with all three exclusive to max-level characters decked out in top-end gear.



EXTREME PRIMALS

■ **BRILLIANTLY DESIGNED AND** stressful as hell, *A Realm Reborn*'s Primal boss battles demand great knowledge and cooperation from parties. So if the Hard Mode variants of Ifrit, Titan (screw you, Titan) and Garuda weren't enough for you, maybe the new Extreme versions will give you the thrill you seek. Again, eight players join the fight here and boss patterns and tactics change compared to previous incarnations. Still, the basics don't change much so once you learn how best to deal with each phase it's simply a case of finding a good group with similar knowledge and skills of the appropriate madness to take these bastards down. Also, screw you, Titan.



COMPANY HOUSING

■ **ANOTHER NEW ADDITION** in patch 2.1 was the ability for Free Companies (guilds, basically) to purchase property, and while initial pricing was exorbitant, it has since been made more reasonable. Plots of various sizes can be purchased on lots in each of the three main city-states, with crafters and merchants offering trinkets and furniture with which to decorate the new pad. While prices are still in the millions of Gil, that's not too much of a reach for an organised and generous Free Company. It's worth it for the communal area where you can relax between battles, chat with fellow FC members or bang away at that anvil of yours and piss everyone else off.



PvP

■ **THE WOLVES' DEN** is open to the public at last, allowing two groups of four (either queued for as with Duties or entered as a four-player Light Party) to smash each other to bits. To say that it's underdeveloped at the moment would be something of an understatement – it's literally just this one deathmatch mode on one map – but with unique PvP gear, skills and currency, it's clear that this is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.



EVENT FATES

■ **CROSSOVERS ARE ALL** the rage these days, so it's not really all that surprising when guest characters pop up in limited-run group battles. So far, we've seen Lightning, *Dragon Quest*

Brickmen and *FFXI*'s Shantotto, but we're sure more will follow – there are rewards for each as with seasonal events, so you're encouraged to keep checking in and find out what's new.



COMING SOON... What to expect in the imminent 2.2 patch and beyond

LEVIATHAN

■ **DONE WITH THE** old Primals? Another will be joining their ranks shortly in the form of sea serpent Leviathan, presumably with a Hard (and possibly even Extreme) version. There were already guides online by the time we reached each boss (don't look at us like that...) so it'll be interesting to see how everyone gets on against the lord of the oceans without such a crutch.

INDIVIDUAL HOUSING

■ **UNLIKELY TO ARRIVE** in the next patch but on the way all the same, players will be able to buy their own houses rather than just sharing them with FC members. No details yet on where plots will be or how pricing will stack up (gulp) but it'll be nice to have somewhere to get away from it all.

VANITY SLOTS

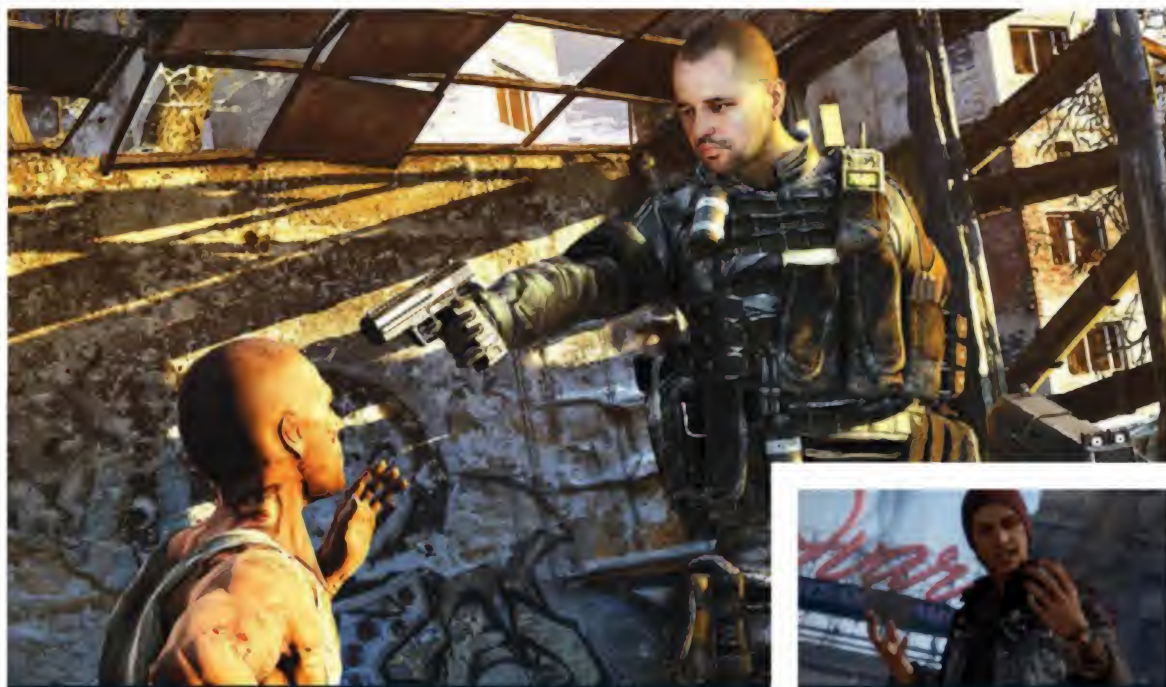
■ **END-GAME DUNGEON RUNS** can be boring when each class only has a couple of viable weapon and armour options. Vanity will allow you to equip one set of gear for stats and another for looks – if you want the stats from your iLvl 90 gear but want to dress up as Lightning, you should be able to soon.

MORE END-GAME

■ **NEW HARD MODE** dungeons, new raids, new Primals, new FATES, new gear... new everything, basically. A huge amount of content was added in 2.1, with the promise of a similarly ludicrous amount of awesome new stuff to explore, hoard and murder in every new patch.

PLAY+ NEW PS4 VIDEOS

All the latest video trailers and features for PS4 are on our new website...

www.play-mag.co.uk

GET EVEN
WHAT IS REAL? WE DON'T KNOW



INFAMOUS: SECOND SON
I HAVE THE POWER(S)



DAYLIGHT
IRONICALLY, SET AT NIGHT



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE
FUS RO DAMN, THIS GAME IS HUGE



EDF 2025
BILLIONS OF BIG BAD BUGS BLASTED ON A BUDGET



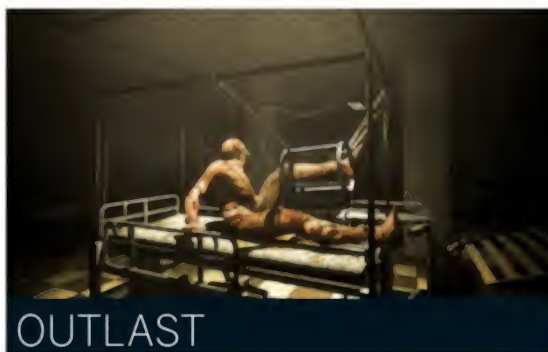
DEEP DOWN
NOBODY MENTION DARK SOULS

twitch LIVE GAMEPLAY STREAMING

Join the **Play** team for live streaming events and shared gameplaytwitch.tv/PlayUK

TOURNAMENTS!

Over the coming months we plan on running a series of tournaments over various games, with prizes for the best players. These prizes will probably be games but may also consist of *Star Wars* miniatures and second-hand copies of *Keith Lemon: The Movie* on Blu-ray (nah, for real, the prizes will be games). Make sure you keep an eye on our Twitter, Facebook and Twitch channels for your own chance to play and win!



OUTLAST



What's more fun than watching other people play horror games?

Well, playing them yourself perhaps, but if that's not an option then check out us playing recent PS Plus game, the spooky *Outlast*. Warning: there's a chance that Sam's alter-ego, The Small Red Machine, might take over the stream.

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PlayMagUK

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TOP 10 JRPGS



HAVING YOUR OWN opinions is too much work, so take a load off and let us tell you what the ten best JRPGs of the last generation were. The fact that we ourselves couldn't agree on all of them is irrelevant...

DRIVECLUB



IT'S STILL COMING, we swear, although none of us knows when. Why has Sony's first PS4 racer been delayed?

MINECRAFT

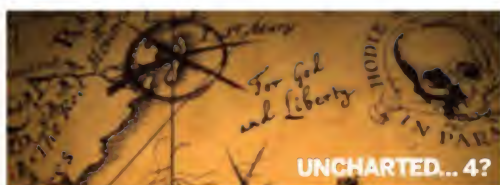


IT'S FINALLY ON PS3! Hooray! We've reviewed *Minecraft* for the Sony die-hards who are new to this confusing, blocky world.

ALIEN: ISOLATION



ALIEN GAMES HAVE really been through a rough patch these last few years. Is it finally time to get excited about *Alien* again?



UNCHARTED... 4?

WE KNOW THERE'S a new *Uncharted* on the way, but that's all we know. Sequel? Prequel? Kart racing spin-off? Shrug.

YAIBA: NINJA GAIDEN Z

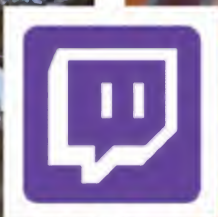


LOOK AWAY NOW, *Ninja Gaiden* traditionalists: this is not the game you want. *Yaiba* is a complete 180 for the series, with simple combat, over-the-top weapons and comic book graphics. But is it still any good?



PLANETSIDE 2

We still don't know when *PlanetSide 2* is coming to PS4, but we've been playing it on PC to get ready. Take a watch as we get killed (a lot) while learning exactly how the game is played. Trust us, it's a big mission – you'll want to do some homework. What better way to learn?



EVERQUEST NEXT LANDMARK

Our good buddies over at NowGamer have managed to wrangle alpha access to *EverQuest Next Landmark*. *Landmark* is the creation suite for the upcoming MMO, with the potential for your created items to be used in the real game. Do a watch over on their channel: NowGamerTV.

SHARING



PS4: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

Check out Imagine Publishing's new bookazine, **PS4: The Complete Manual**. It's a complete guide to your new console, from the basic stuff through to advanced tips like changing your hard drive, along with a verdict on every game currently available. Pick it up for only £7.99 from any good mag retailer, or order one on greatdigitalmags.com.



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NOWGAMER

All the breaking videogames news, exclusive videos and expert comment can be found on our multi-format website... www.nowgamer.com

PLAY+PLUS PlayList

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS GAMES WE ARE DOING A PLAY ON...



top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn
- 2 Toukiden: The Age Of Demons
- 3 Borderlands 2
- 4 Strider
- 5 OlliOlli



top five LIAM WARR

- 1 Lego Marvel Super Heroes
- 2 Battlefield 4
- 3 NBA 2K14
- 4 FIFA 14
- 5 Minecraft



top five STEVE HOLMES

- 1 Dark Souls
- 2 Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2
- 3 Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag
- 4 Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
- 5 Thief



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 Dark Souls II
- 2 Outlast
- 3 Bravely Default
- 4 Don't Starve
- 5 Dragon Ball Z: Battle Of Z

PS4 LISTING

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Don't Starve	240	81%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Knack	238	55%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
Resogun	238	91%



An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up. Resogun is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff

Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
War Thunder	239	80%

PS3 LISTING

007 Legends	225	44%
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquapuz Dream Match	239	70%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Skechter	201	85%
Beowulf	161	61%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries	188	65%
Of Little Riddle Episode 1	193	86%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brother: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	199	71%
Cresent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubix HD	207	76%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
Digger HD	186	52%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Minecraft: PS3 Edition	93%
The Walking Dead Season Two: Episode 1	89%
Don't Starve	81%
Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII	80%
Sorcery Saga: Curse Of The Great Curry God	70%
Tiny Brains	68%

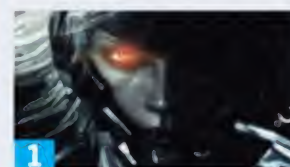
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	227	93%
 DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Droplitz	184	91%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
Elefunk	170	45%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Euforia	212	85%
Everybody's Golf 5	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
The Fight	199	42%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Geon	175	71%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, Ascension is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece: the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
Grid 2	232	79%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	227	71%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%

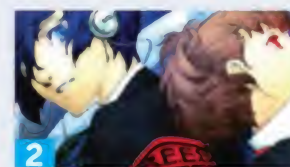
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
LA Noire	206	91%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In The Shadows	173	69%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%

*denotes import review

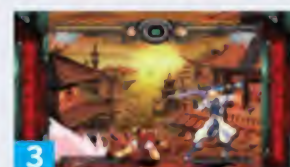
TOP TEN SOUNDTRACKS



1 **Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance**



2 **Persona 3 Portable**



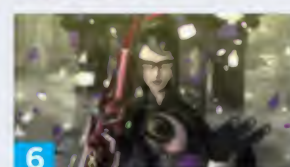
3 **Guilty Gear XX**



4 **Marvel Vs Capcom 2**



5 **The Last Of Us**



6 **Bayonetta**



7 **Dynasty Warriors 8**



8 **Mass Effect 2**

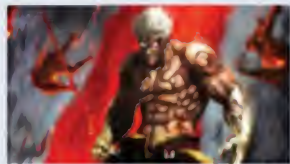


9 **Catherine**



10 **Braid**

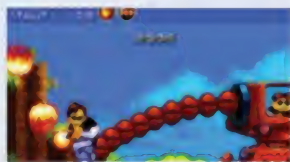
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



MACHISMO

PLAY: ASURA'S WRATH

One of the most over-the-top, crazy action anime shows we've ever... played. *Asura's Wrath* is little more than a feature-length QTE, but man is it awesome. Expect yelling, punching and even yell-punching.



SHOOT-EM-UPS

PLAY: GUNSTAR HEROES

If you consider yourself a fan of shoot-'em-ups but haven't played this Mega Drive classic, you are a fraud and a phony. Created by some of the dudes responsible for the also amazing *Contra III*, it's a must-play of the genre.



PLOT TWISTS

PLAY: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD

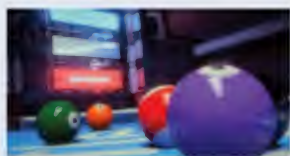
This Vita visual novel has more mysteries than a *Poirot* marathon. If you figure out everything before it's happened, you've been looking up spoilers. For shame.



COFFEE

PLAY: DEADLY PREMONITION

It might claim to be open-world survival horror, but *Deadly Premonition* features a hell of a lot of protagonist Francis York Morgan going on about how much he loves coffee.



HUSTLING

PLAY: HUSTLE KINGS

Every day I'm hustling. EVERY DAY. It never ends. I want to stop but I can't. Please help me. When I sleep, I dream of hustling. If for some reason you want to hustle EVEN MORE, this is a decent pool game.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Magic The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	208	70%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.

Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	202	51%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Minecraft	240	93%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	173	60%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïf'd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%



Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.

Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%



NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
NIGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
Okami HD	225	90%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Pain	183	69%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	235	79%
Peggle	189	94%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%




Essential for both *Persona* fans and fighting game enthusiasts, *Persona 4 Arena* is an absolute joy to play.

PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	67%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen™ Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	194	92%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Soldner X-2: Final Prototypes	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	230	79%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Supersonic: Acrobatic Rocket Powered Battle Cars	177	65%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
 When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.		
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
 <i>The Walking Dead</i> should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.		
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	183	61%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Tot Home	162	31%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turnble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Under Siege	207	71%
Unearthed: Trial Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrent Story	189	82%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vandel Hearts: Flames of Judgement	192	87%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	195	65%
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Ballite Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
 Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: XCOM is a phenomenal remaking of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.		
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yar's Rev	206	57%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING

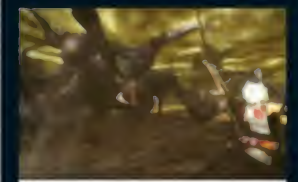


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Menuru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
f10w	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
PixelJunk: Monsters	163	94%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	239	80%
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipeOut 2048	215	87%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Toukiden

WHY (was it chosen?)

Because it's basically Monster Hunter

LUKE ALBIGES

I WON'T LIE – I bought a 3DS to play *Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate* and a Wii U to play the HD version. Yes, I know, I have a little bit of a problem. But with Capcom annoyingly avoiding the Vita with its monster-slaying series so far, I've been playing every single pretender to the throne that has come along. Only *Soul Sacrifice* really grabbed me, but it just never really managed to scratch the same itch as *Monster Hunter*. However, Omega Force's *Toukiden* does. The *Dynasty Warriors* team has really come good with this, another feather in Vita's already impressive cap and just one more reason that anyone who claims Vita has no good games is a moron.



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

WHY (was it chosen?)

Because I finally got round to it

SAM SMITH

BEING A BIG *Castlevania* fan for quite a while, I've been meaning to play *Lords Of Shadow* for years, and the release of the sequel has finally kicked my arse into gear. It's not a classic *Castlevania* game, just as I feared, but it is bloody good on its own merits.



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